

HANDICAPPED

THE STORY OF A
WHITE-HAIRED BOY



HOMER GREENE

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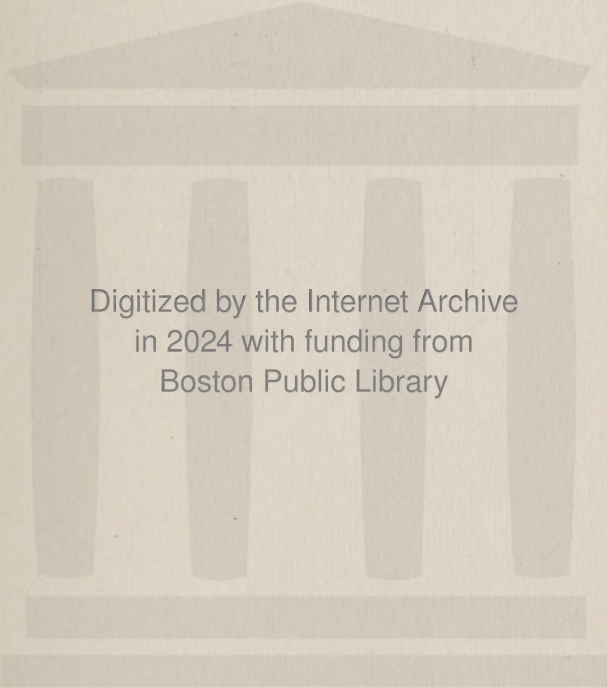
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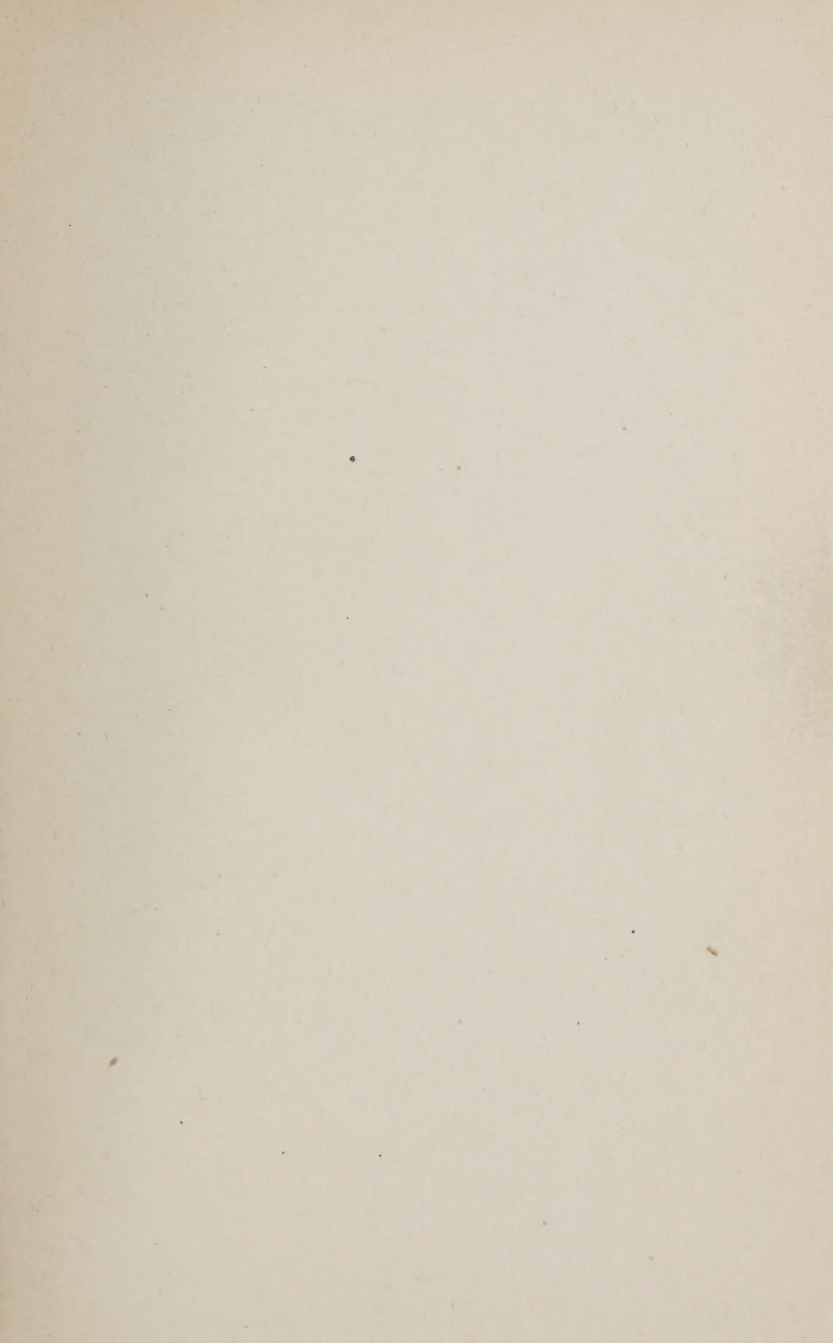
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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

HANDICAPPED

The Story of a White-haired Boy





(p. 212)

I APPEAL TO YOU AS YOUR SON

HANDICAPPED

The Story of a White-haired Boy

BY

HOMER GREENE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

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1914

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HANDICAPPED

The Story of a White-haired Boy

CHAPTER I

FIFTY years ago the wagon road from Mooresville to Redstone ran up through the valley of the Redstone River as it does to-day. It was not much of a river, even in those days. A boy could throw a stone across it almost anywhere, save where it widened out into a mill-pond. But it watered a fertile valley; and at Redstone, nine miles from Mooresville, the county seat, it swept down a steep declivity forty feet in height, if you measured perpendicularly, from the base, where the foam always hung, to the point where the swift waters curled over the upper edge.

It was along this road that the Redstone stage was moving, homeward bound, on a certain afternoon of August, 1857. The Redstone stage was not a four-horse coach, such as was often seen on the main traveled

highways of Pennsylvania in the years preceding the Civil War. It was simply a plain, two-seated box-wagon, somewhat rickety from long use, drawn by a pair of roan horses, not ill-kept in appearance, but plainly unambitious. That Hamilton Polley, the driver, concurred in the belief that they were unambitious was quite apparent. For his "Gittup, Joe! Gittup, Jinny!" could be heard almost continually above the rattle of his wagon.

He had only one passenger with him this afternoon, a man, possibly thirty-five years of age, handsome of face, rather under than over the medium height, but well and gracefully built. His clothes were cheap and a trifle soiled, but they fitted him well, and his white shirt and collar and flowing black tie marked him as being something more than the ordinary countryman. It was apparent that he had been drinking. His face would have disclosed that fact had not his voice and articulation betrayed him. Not that he was drunk. When Richard Bolton was drunk his intuitive sense of decency and propriety caused him to retire from the public

eye. When he was only partially in his cups, as on this particular day, he was simply affable, talkative, and confidential. He was telling the stage-driver about a span of black horses he had seen up in Bradford County that in his judgment would make a splendid team to draw the Redstone stage.

"Only thing I have against 'em," he said, "is that they 're black. I have no fancy for black horses. They remind me too much of black Republicans."

"Eh! I'm a black Republican myself," responded the driver. "What's more, you ain't got no call to speak ill of nobody."

"Escuse me, Hamilton. I should have inquired as to your politics befo' speakin' my mind so plainly. I have nothin' against you personally, and I admire your great leader Frémont. But, bein' of aristocratic lineage myself, — you know I have blue blood in my veins, Hamilton?"

"I don't know nothin' about it; but ef ye hev, it ain't kep' ye from makin' a consumed fool o' yerself."

"Why, Hamilton, tha's remarkable opinion. What do you mean?"

"I mean 'at any man 't 'll go off fer weeks an' months at a time an' leave his family to shift fer themselves is a low-down good-fer-nothin'. That's plain talk, Dick, but you deserve it."

"But, my dear man, you misjudge me. I have been unable to fin' work at m' trade in Redstone. I was obliged to seek it elsewhere. Business has been poor owin' to the panic. I found it ne'sary to accept a situation in a livery-stable. However, forshune has of late shmiled upon me and I am returnin' to my home an' fam'ly with an abundance."

"I see ye've got a lot o' truck here. Goodness knows where ye got it. Stole it, mebbe, the way you did them hoss blankets o' mine. I hope to gracious the nex' feller you steal from won't be so kind-hearted as I was, an' keep ye out o' jail fer yer family's sake. Git-tup there, Joe! Stir yerself, Jinny!"

When the horses had started into a gentle trot at the touch of the driver's whip, the accused man undertook the task of defending himself.

"It is true," he said, "that in an un-

guarded moment, my brain bein' somewhat confused by alcohol, I mistook your blankets for a pair of my own —"

"That's a lie, Dick, an' you know it. You ain't hed a pair o' blankets o' yer own in ten year. I tell ye a man can't wrastle with John Barleycorn year in an' year out, the way you've been doin', and hev any sense left o' what's right an' wrong. Ef ye don't stop it you're a gone goose, sure as yer name's Dick Bolton!"

The passenger turned to his companion with a sudden burst of half-maudlin confidence.

"Let me tell you somethin', Hamilton. I've taken my las' drink. I took it at the Depot Hotel fifteen minutes before I started with you. Henceforth I inten' to be to'l abstainer, an' stay home an' take care of my dear wife an' child."

But the stage-driver sniffed unbelievably. "I've heard that story too often," he said. "When ye git good an' sober an' ben to home two months without a drop o' whiskey under yer skin, then tell me ye've sworn off fer good, an' mebbe I'll believe ye."

The half-intoxicated man continued to protest, but the driver paid little further heed to him, and by and by his chin dropped on his breast and he fell asleep. It was not until the stage stopped, an hour later, to rest the horses, midway of the long hill that led up to the Redstone flats, that Bolton awoke. But when he straightened himself up and spoke, his eyes were clearer, his muscles were firmer, and his tongue less thick. It was evident that he was recovering from the immediate effect of his last libations.

"We're almost there, Hamilton," he said. "Mollie and Paul don't know I'm coming. I thought I'd surprise 'em."

"Surprise 'em some more," was the stage-driver's sharp comment, "an' stay to home an' do some honest work, an' take care o' one o' the best little women an' one o' the smartest boys in Redstone Township."

"Right you are, Hamilton, and I shall, and thank you for the advice."

Ten minutes later the wagon was driven up to a rude stepping-stone at the roadside, and the passenger alighted. He took out a leather wallet and displayed a roll of bills.

"What's the fare, Hamilton?" he inquired.

"Well, le' me see," was the response, as the driver handed out an assortment of parcels from under his wagon seat. "You an' them bundles ort to be wuth about three shillin'."

"That 's entirely satisfactory," said Bolton, handing him several coins; "and good-bye and good luck to you."

But before the stage-driver could gather up his reins, or the other man his bundles, a boy emerged from the door of a small, one-story house set back in the lot, and came hesitatingly down the path toward the road. He was apparently about twelve years of age. His feet were bare, he wore nothing on his head, his short trousers were held up by a single suspender, and his blue calico shirt was widely open at the throat. But the remarkable thing about him was not his clothing nor his manner. It was that his abundant silky hair was white as snow, the pupils of his eyes were a pronounced red, the iris about them a delicate pink, and his complexion like clear white marble. He was an albino.

The first of the two men to notice his coming was Hamilton Polley, the driver.

"Hello, Paul!" he shouted cheerily. "I've brought the ol' man home. I reckon he's got suthin' fer ye. How 's yer ma to-day?"

"Better, thank you, Mr. Polley," replied Paul, apparently taking courage, and advancing more rapidly.

Richard Bolton dropped the bundles he had already picked up, and turned, with open arms, to meet the boy. The driver clicked to his horses and started on, and father and son were alone together.

"I'm so glad you've come home again, father," said the boy, picking up some of the bundles from the roadside.

"I thought it was time, laddie. Has little mother been sick?"

"It's just worryin' about you since she got your letter. She'll be awful glad to see you, an' to see you —"

The boy paused suddenly, and his pale face flushed with evident embarrassment.

"Say it, my boy," replied Bolton good-naturedly, "sober. Yes, I'm sober to-day, or so near it that I would deceive the very

elect. And what's more, sonny, I'm going to stay sober. Here, you carry these bundles and I'll take the rest. Come, let's go see mother."

Looking from a curtained window a woman watched the incident at the roadside. She was a little, frail, pale woman, with care-worn face and large, questioning eyes. She, too, was surprised, not only to see her husband coming, but also to see him apparently sober, laden with bundles, walking steadily up the path and talking cheerfully with the boy. She met them on the threshold. The man dropped his parcels and took her in his arms.

"There, Mollie," as the quick tears filled her eyes and coursed down her cheeks; "there, dear; I've come home to stay and make you happy."

And, sobbing out her joy, she believed him. Even though she knew from his breath, from his appearance, from his articulation, that his reform, if he had reformed, must have been startlingly recent; even though he had deceived her a hundred times before by the same protestations, yet to-day she believed him and was happy.

"See what I've brought you," he said gleefully, after the first greetings were over and he sat down to open the parcels. "Here's a new dress for you. I told 'em you were a little thing, knee-high to a grasshopper, but they were sure it would fit. And here's a bonnet to go with it."

He held up his purchases for inspection while his wife clasped her hands in admiration. She might well be pleased, for everybody said that, whatever his faults, Dick Bolton had good taste in the matter of apparel.

"And here," continued the man, "is a suit o' clothes for Paul. Long pants for a big boy. And a cap and boots. Look at 'em. Oh! and here's a pair of shoes for mother."

"Lovely!" exclaimed the little woman. "They're perfectly lovely!"

Already Paul was trying on his jacket and cap, while his mother sat smoothing out tenderly the folds of the new gown for which she had longed for many months.

"What did you bring for yourself, father?" asked Paul in a moment of respite.

"A hunk of corn-beef," was the quick

reply. "Here it is; the best five pounds of corn-beef to be had in Mooresville. Mother's going to cook it with some of the cabbage from your garden, my boy, and we'll have a feast."

There were other parcels to be opened and exhibited. There was a jack-knife for Paul; and a "Life of George Washington" in a book with a red cover. There were handkerchiefs and gloves and a breastpin for Paul's mother, and a package of Young Hyson tea, a pound of raisins, and a box of candy. It was, indeed, a glorious home-coming for all of them. And then, slowly, insidiously, there came creeping into the little woman's mind and heart a doubt, a fear. Her husband had not come home before in years bearing such evidences of prosperity. What was the meaning of it? How had he attained this sudden wealth? It had been scarcely two weeks since she had received a letter from him saying that he was without work, without money, without friends or shelter. But she stifled her doubts and fought back her fears. Love is credulous and long-suffering. For in spite of his many faults, his dissolute

habits, his unlawful escapades, his careless disregard of her comfort and happiness when the desire for drink overtook him and conquered him, Mollie Bolton loved her husband. In his periods of sobriety and industry, periods which were growing increasingly rare, he was a model of kindness and gentleness and liberality. Even in his cups he was never rude or abusive. Sodden and stupid with drink he often was, but the inborn instinct of a gentleman had always saved him from that crowning infamy of a drunkard's career, abuse of his family. So, to-day, in spite of her doubts, in spite of all that had gone before, she was determined to believe him and have faith in him. She asked no questions, but, as she moved slowly about the room putting away the gifts, he could not fail to see in her eyes and hear in her voice the occasional misgivings that would sweep coldly across her heart. He felt that some explanation was due and he gave it.

"You see, Mollie," he said, "I've had a streak of luck lately. I found a job in a livery-stable up at Towanda, and you know I'm a pretty good horseman, and something

of a horse-jockey, so they gave me a team of handsome blacks to sell on commission. Well, I sold 'em at a fancy price, pocketed the commission, and here I am."

While his story was not convincing, she had no recourse but to believe it.

"I'm going to stay here now," he continued, "and find work at Redstone where they're building the new grist-mill. I'll be home every night now, Mollie, and I'll come home sober, too. Oh, you'll see!"

He took her in his arms again and kissed her, and in the flood of happiness that his promises brought to her, she forgot, for the moment, her doubts and fears.

After that they all went out to see Paul's garden, and the little tool-house that he had built with his own hands. For whether from his father, who was a skilled carpenter and mechanic, or from some more remote ancestor, Paul had inherited what appeared to his parents to be great mechanical genius.

"He has done all the work in the garden himself," said Paul's mother proudly, "and we've had peas and beans and lettuce and corn and early potatoes and ever so many

things. Why, if it had n't been for the garden we would have —" She checked herself suddenly. "I must go to the house," she said, "and get supper"; and she hurried away.

So she went and began to prepare the supper with a lighter heart than she had had for many a day. She found herself, at one time, singing a snatch of a song that she had known in her girlhood —

"And what though my spirit be burdened with care,
Or gloomy the heavens above;
Oh, who can be hopeless, or who can despair
If only there's some one to love;
Some one to love."

The supper was, indeed, a success. Richard Bolton declared that never in his life had he eaten a finer meal. He praised Paul's vegetables, he praised his wife's cooking, he was happy over everything. They had never seen him in better spirits, more absolutely care-free, more hopeful of every future thing than he was this day. So they were all happy. And the meal ran on in its course as joyously as though they were eating in a palace instead of a cabin, of the most lux-



PRAISED HIS WIFE'S COOKING

urious fare instead of the plainest food, as though there had never been a cloud in their sky or a ripple on the placid surface of their lives.

And then, in the midst of it all, a horse and wagon stopped by the bars at the roadside, and two men alighted, and when they had tied their horse to a hitching-post they came leisurely up the path toward the house. Richard Bolton, looking out through the open doorway, saw them coming. Paul, too, saw them coming, and his mother saw them as well. The color which her brief happiness had brought into her face fled from it and left it white and fearful. She turned her wide and anxious eyes upon her husband.

“Who are they, Richard, and what do they want?” she asked.

If Bolton knew their errand, or felt any apprehension concerning them, he did not at that moment disclose, by any word or look, his knowledge or his feelings. He gave a quick glance through the rear door of the kitchen across the open field to the line of woods that skirted the base of the hill, then he turned his face and gazed with

apparent unconcern at the approaching men.

"It looks like Bob McClintock," he said finally. "I don't know the other one, nor what they want."

It was Bob McClintock, constable of Redstone Township, and his errand was soon to be disclosed.

"Good-evening, Bob!" said Bolton cordially, as the officer came upon the porch. "Won't you come in?"

"No, I guess it won't be necessary," was the reply. "Good-evening, Mrs. Bolton! Can we see you for a minute outside, Dick?"

They went out and stepped down from the porch to the path where the other man was standing.

"This," said the constable, "is Mr. Blakeslee, constable of Towanda Borough. He has a warrant for your arrest, backed by 'Squire Jones."

"A warrant? for my arrest?" inquired Bolton. "What's the charge?"

"Horse-stealing," was the curt reply.

"There must be some mistake," said

Bolton. "I've stolen no horses. Let me see your warrant."

The warrant was produced and handed to him. He read it over carefully.

"There must be some mistake," he repeated. "Are you sure it is n't some one else you're looking for?"

"I guess we've got the right man all right," laughed the Towanda constable. "It says Richard Bolton there, don't it? An' your name's Richard Bolton, ain't it?"

"That's my name, but —"

"Then I guess you better come along. You can argue the case before the justice if you want to; my business is to get you there."

"But, gentlemen," persisted the accused man, "listen! I've stolen no horses. I sold a team day before yesterday for Mr. Guernsey, of Towanda, on commission. I have the money in my pocket. When Mr. Guernsey gives me a proper receipt for it, I'll turn it over to him."

"Well," was the reply of the Bradford County constable, "Mr. Guernsey's up at 'Squire Jones's, an' the man you sold the

horses to is up there, an' the horses themselves are there, so you'd best go up there an' settle it."

"Yes, Dick," added the Redstone officer, "you'd better go along quietly and explain it up there."

"Very well, gentlemen," responded Bolton courteously. "Just as you say, of course. If Mr. Guernsey's there, I shall quickly be able to satisfy him that no crime has been committed or intended."

Mollie Bolton, sitting at the table, too suddenly weak to rise, had heard enough of the conversation to understand the meaning of the visit. She knew that her husband was again in trouble and disgrace; trouble more serious, disgrace more deep than he had ever brought on himself or his family before. But even in the shock of the knowledge she clung to the hope that what he said was true, and that there must be some mistake. He came back into the room and got his hat.

"They have a warrant for my arrest," he said calmly, "but they've got the wrong man. I'll have to go with them, though. It'll all be cleared up in half an hour. I'll be

back this evening, or to-morrow morning at the latest. If I should n't come then, send Paul up to find what's gone wrong."

He bent over and kissed her tenderly, patted Paul affectionately on the shoulder, put on his hat and went out to the waiting officers. The one from Bradford County had taken from his pocket a pair of shining steel handcuffs.

"Shall we put them on?" he inquired, holding them out toward his prisoner.

"No!" responded Bob McClintock; "put 'em back in your pocket. I know Dick Bolton, and I know we can trust him."

"Thank you, Bob," said Dick; "I can assure you that I shall not try to escape." And he laughed lightly at the thought.

So the officer pocketed his irons, and the three men walked leisurely down the path, climbed into the buggy, and rode away toward Redstone.

Still Mollie Bolton sat at the table whereon lay her half-eaten supper, and could not speak. The shock had been so sudden, the plunge from hope and happiness to this new disaster had been so swift, that it

took her breath away. Paul, too, was dumb with astonishment. In a vague way he understood what it was all about, but his very helplessness made him silent. And he never forgot, so long as he lived, the look of grief, of hopelessness, of dreadful despair on the white face of his mother in that moment. Through the open door she watched the buggy with the three men in it till it disappeared at a turn of the road, then she flung her arms on the table, dropped her head on them, and gave way to an outburst of pitiable grief.

And the boy with white hair and pink eyes, and skin the color of marble, stood by her and put his arm around her neck and sought to comfort her.

CHAPTER II

WHEN Richard Bolton was taken before Esquire Jones that August afternoon on the charge of horse-stealing, no one appeared to give bail for him. Indeed, it would have been a rash man who would have made himself responsible for Dick Bolton's appearance at any court. So he was taken to Towanda and remanded to the county jail. At the September term of the court his trial came on. The evidence against him was overwhelming. He could not rebut it. His only excuse was that, though he had taken the horses without leave and driven them away and sold them as his own, he had done it while under the influence of liquor, and was therefore not responsible for his conduct. But the court would not accept this excuse, nor would the jury, and he was promptly convicted and sentenced to two years of solitary confinement at hard labor in the state prison at Philadelphia.

It is always one of the sad and deplorable

consequences of crime that the punishment of the criminal bears usually as severely upon his innocent family as upon himself. It is true that in Richard Bolton's case he was no more likely to take care of his family when at liberty than when confined by law. But the disgrace of his punishment was just as keenly felt by his wife and child, who still loved him, as though he had been one of the most irreproachable of husbands and fathers.

Mollie Bolton sank rapidly under the force of the blow. She had never had the physical strength to perform the tasks that the wife of a penniless drunkard must perform. So her health had given way while she was still young. Abandoned by her own family because she had persistently refused to give up the husband who had proved himself to be so utterly regardless of her health and comfort, she had no one on whom to rely; and a drunkard's wife is never likely to have many helpful friends. Paul was, indeed, her only comfort. Gentle, helpful, loving as he always was, he became the one source of strength that stayed and animated

her through the sad and bitter years. Yet he was a cause of sorrow as well. He was an albino. Not that she loved him less on that account, but rather more, and because she loved him so much, and pitied him so much, she suffered with him. Gazed at, ridiculed, and ostracized on account of his appearance, his sensitive soul rebelled at conditions for which he was not responsible, but which, as far as he could see, must always remain. He had no companions of his own age because other children, fearing ridicule by their fellows, would not play with him.

When he was seven years old his mother sent him to the village school. At the end of three days, having been teased, harassed, and tormented beyond endurance by thoughtless children, he came home, flung his first reader and his dinner-pail far from him, buried his burning face in his mother's lap, and together they sobbed out their mutual grief at his misfortune. Henceforth she was his only teacher, as he was her only comfort.

But in the sad days following her husband's arrest, even Paul's constant help and tender ministrations were not sufficient to

keep up her health or spirits. Each day found her dragging her footsteps more and more slowly around her cottage, until there came a day when she did not even rise from her bed. A kind-hearted woman from an adjoining farm, a quarter of a mile away, came morning and evening to "look a little after Mis' Bolton"; but for the rest Paul was her only nurse and companion.

It was apparent that things could not go on permanently in this way. The sick woman required more efficient care than either Paul or Mrs. Batt could give her, the garden was getting thin, the poor-masters were grumbling about giving further outside relief, and cold weather with its many necessities was coming rapidly on. To such a situation there could be but one end, and Mollie Bolton foresaw it. It came on a day in late October. Two poor-masters, accompanied by Lyman Gifford, came to her cottage one afternoon on an errand. Lyman Gifford owned the house in which she lived, and the garden which surrounded it, and out of the weekly dollar that the poor-district doled out to her, he demanded and received first

of all his weekly rent. Moreover, he owned the acres on acres of farm land which bordered the highway on both sides for a mile, and the big white farmhouse halfway on the road to Redstone. He owned the forest-covered slope that reached back toward the foothills of the Moosic Range, and he owned the silent stretches of the stream above the Redstone Falls. Lyman Gifford was rich, as country riches went in those days; but he was hard and niggardly, and no penny ever escaped him that rigid economy or grinding conditions or selfish foresight could draw into his purse. Hamilton Polley once said: "Ef Lyme Gifford ever expects to git into the kingdom o' heaven, he'll hev to begin perty soon givin' some o' them farms away, and onloadin' himself of a lot o' meanness an' stinginess; an' ef he does git there, they better look out; fust thing they know he'll be ownin' the golden streets an' sellin' 'em out in chunks at a profit of ten per cent to the square inch."

But Lyman Gifford was here to-day with the poor-masters. Mrs. Bolton was alone in the house when they knocked at her door,

sitting propped up in her bed and trying to sew. She bade them enter and be seated. She knew their errand. They had come to tell her that she must go to the poor-house. Very well, she was ready to go — on one condition.

Mr. Hodgson was the spokesman for the party. He was evidently impressed with the delicacy and importance of the business he had in hand, for he knew that, although Mrs. Bolton was a town charge, she was nevertheless a woman of education and refinement.

“We are here on what may be an unpleasant errand for you, Mrs. Bolton,” he began.

“Yes?” she replied inquiringly.

“I am obliged to say that the poor-district will not be able longer to furnish you with outside relief.”

“No?”

“No. So that it will be necessary, if we are to assist you further, to provide for you at the poor-house.”

“I am quite ready to go, gentlemen.”

The two members of the board plainly

showed their relief. They had so often met with opposition and protest and tears under similar circumstances.

“On one condition,” added Mrs. Bolton.

“And that is?”

“That my son shall go with me.”

This was evidently not in accordance with the programme of the poor-masters. Mr. Hodgson cleared his throat and began to explain.

“We had thought,” he said, “to place the boy in another home where he might have good surroundings and learn habits of industry. In fact, Mr. Gifford here has agreed to take him, free of expense to us, and give him a certain amount of schooling, and teach him the work of the farm. Am I right, Mr. Gifford?”

“Quite right,” replied the gentleman addressed. “I will feed him and clothe him also, and teach him to be frugal and industrious.”

It is wonderful how a frail, sick, sweet-mannered little woman can hold at bay three resolute men. With a determination born of love and fear she said: —

"Gentlemen, I shall not go anywhere where my boy may not go with me. There are reasons why he needs me, and I need him, and we must not be separated."

"But, my dear woman," protested Mr. Hodgson. "It is for the boy's own good that we want to place him elsewhere. We wish to save him from the a — a — disgrace of having been to the poor-house. We wish to inculcate in him a love for honest labor, so that he may not follow in the unfortunate footsteps of his — a — a — "

And there she interrupted him.

"I will not listen to attacks on the character of my husband. So far as Paul is concerned, my mind is made up. He shall go to the poor-house with me, or I shall not go. If I must leave this house, I am quite willing to be taken into the road and die there; but I shall be separated from my son only by death."

No one could doubt that Mrs. Bolton meant exactly what she said. The two poor-masters looked at each other and then at Mr. Gifford. Here was a situation, indeed. How was it to be met?

“We will retire for consultation,” said Mr. Hodgson, “and advise you later.”

The three men arose and stepped awkwardly to the porch, closing the door behind them. They were satisfied that Mrs. Bolton would not yield; and neither the poor-masters nor Mr. Gifford courted the odium that would be attached to leaving a starving woman to die of exposure at the roadside. Moreover, Lyman Gifford wanted his house. He had already rented it to a responsible person from the following Monday. Therefore he gave up the plan of taking Paul, and the supervisors of the poor surrendered. When they stepped back into the house eight minutes later, Mr. Hodgson said: “We have taken your wish into consideration, Mrs. Bolton, and against our better judgment and the interests of the town we have decided to permit the boy to go with you to the poor-house.”

“Thank you, gentlemen! When do you wish me to be ready?”

“Let me see,” mused the spokesman, “to-day is Thursday; how will Saturday do?”

“I will be ready on Saturday.”

That was all. The men said “Good-after-noon,” and took their leave. Mollie Bolton sat there gripping the coverlets of her bed until she heard their wagon rattle away, then she fell back on her pillow and sobbed as she had done that day when the constable came from Bradford County and arrested her husband.

Almost within a stone’s throw of the Bolton barway the poor-masters and Lyman Gifford met the Redstone stage. Paul was on the seat with the driver. He had been over to help Jacob Batt pick up cider apples and was going home with the wages of his labor in his pocket, when Hamilton Polley overtook him and asked him, as he had done many times before, to ride. Paul had a genuine affection for Hamilton Polley. The stage-driver was the only person in Redstone Township, outside of his father and mother, who ignored the boy’s physical misfortune and treated him as a friend and an equal.

It occurred to Mr. Hodgson that it would be proper, and at the same time would give

evidence of his authority, to acquaint the boy with the arrangement that had just been concluded. So he signaled the driver to stop. Addressing Paul he said: —

“We have just made an arrangement with your mother by which she is to go to the poor-house, and we have decided to permit you to accompany her there.”

“Yes, sir,” replied Paul, undecided as to just how he should receive the news: “thank you, sir!”

“And as she is to go on Saturday of this week you had better stay home from to-day on and help her get ready.”

“Yes, sir.”

The poor-masters started to drive on as though the incident were closed, but Hamilton Polley had something to say and they waited.

“Le’ me see,” inquired the driver, “did you say Sataday? Perty short notice, ain’t it?”

“Plenty of time,” responded Lyman Gifford, “to get what things they have together.”

“Ain’t got much, thet’s so,” said Polley.

“Could n’t git much back rent out o’ them things on a landlord’s warrant, could ye, Lyme? By the way,” handling his whip carelessly, “rented the place to somebody else, ain’t ye?”

“I have. I believe it’s mine,” was the curt reply.

“New family goin’ in a Monday, ain’t they?”

“Yes, on Monday. What’s that to you?”

“Leetle more ecconomical fer the deestric’ to git the Boltons out fust, ain’t it?”

“That’s neither here nor there,” responded Gifford angrily. “Besides, it’s none of your business what arrangements the poor-masters make with paupers.”

“None o’ my business, eh? Well, now, look here, Lyme! I help pay the taxes that goes into your pocket fer rent fer them paupers, an’ I’ve got suthin’ to say about it; an’ what I say is —”

But Lyman Gifford did not wait to hear anything more that the stage-driver had to say. He whipped up his horse and started on, leaving a cloud of dust in the wake of his rapidly moving wagon.

As for Hamilton Polley, he sat back in his seat and laughed, laughed long and heartily. It was his greatest joy in life to heckle Lyman Gifford.

"I would n't 'a' thought you'd dare do it," said Paul, when they started on.

"Oh! you need n't be afraid o' that kind," replied the driver. "Jest catch 'em back o' the horns like you do a bullhead, an' they can't sting ye."

When the Bolton barway was reached, Polley got out and tied his horses to the hitching-post.

"Guess I'd better go up to the house with ye," he said, "an' see whether them rapscale-lions bothered yer ma any."

But he remained discreetly outside the cottage until, after a minute, Paul came out and called to him. "Mother wants to see you," he said.

She had not quite recovered from her fit of weeping when Polley entered the room, but she talked to him very calmly.

"We are going to the poor-house, Mr. Polley," she said. "And as I may not see you soon again, I want to thank you — and

Mrs. Polley as well — for all the kindnesses you have done to Paul and me. You've been very good to both of us."

"Now that's all right, Mrs. Bolton," protested Polley. "You don't owe me no thanks; an' Paul's done me more good, by a blame sight, than I hev' him. I'm sorry you've got to go to the poor-house, but I don't see no way out of it, and they say Mis' Dibble up there is right kind-hearted an' competent."

"We shall not want for food and clothing, anyway. Of course, it is n't pleasant to — to —" And the poor woman, still unnerved, gave way again to a fit of weeping.

If anything stirred the depths of Hamilton Polley's nature it was to see a woman shed tears.

"There, now, Mis' Bolton," he said consolingly, "there, now; ef they's any disgrace about it, it ain't your'n, it's Dick Bolton's. Confound 'im! Ef I had 'im here now I'd lick 'im till he could n't holler. Think of it! Him, young an' strong an' the best carpenter in Redstone Township, lettin' liquor git the best of 'im till —"

“Richard is my husband, Mr. Polley, and I can’t —”

“Excuse me, Mis’ Bolton! I did n’t set out to say that, but when I think of his good-fer-nothin’ — excuse me! Goin’ to leave Sataday, be ye?”

“Yes, on Saturday.”

“Well, you jes’ stay right here a Sataday afternoon till I git back with the mail an’ I’ll come for ye with my two-seated buckboard. I ain’t goin’ to let Lyme Gifford cart ye up there in no lumber wagon an’ git six shillin’ from the deestric’ fer it, not by a long shot.”

Hamilton Polley was as good as his word. He came on Saturday afternoon with his two-seated buckboard and took Paul and his invalid mother to the poor-house.

It was not so bad at the poor-house either. The superintendent and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Dibble, realizing that they were no ordinary paupers, were very kind to them and most considerate.

In the midst of new surroundings, with cheerful company, with her wants supplied, Mollie Bolton improved gradually in health

until she was able to move freely about the house, and render much assistance to the superintendent's wife, who in turn appreciated her helpful spirit and refined personality. As for Paul, his advent at the poor-house marked the beginning of the happiest period of his early life. He was not subject to gibes and sneers and ridicule out here. No one stared at him or avoided him or insulted him. His physical peculiarity did not draw to him the unkind notice he had elsewhere received. There were gathered here so many who were abnormal, — the lame, the blind, the dumb, the imbecile, — so many wrecks cast up by the waves of chance or heredity, that a boy with white hair and skin and pink eyes did not attract unusual attention. He was simply one more unfortunate entitled to fellowship with all the others. In less than six weeks' time there was not an inmate of the poor-house who was not glad to claim his fellowship, and not a dumb beast on the farm that would not respond to his call. He loved the cattle and the horses and the dogs, and participated helpfully in all the activities of life on the farm. But his chief pleasure

was found in the carpenter's shop. The poor-house carpenter soon learned that his tools were safe in Paul's hands, and thereafter the boy was permitted to use them freely. He watched and studied all the work that went on. Whenever a pipe was laid, or a door was hung, or a farm machine was repaired, he watched or helped in the process, and was not satisfied until he understood the reasons for and the purpose of it.

One day he took a lock apart and put it together again, and repeated the process until he so thoroughly understood the mechanism of it that with the proper tools he could have made one without difficulty.

Then winter came on and the poor-farm fields were knee-deep with drifted snow, and the wind howled and whistled around the corners of the buildings. But inside the poor-house it was warm and comfortable. The old men gathered in their quarters about the hall stove and told stories of the winters of their boyhood, and the old women sat and gossiped and sewed carpet-rags or pieced quilts. It was then that Alexander McTavish got the poor-house children to-

gether twice a day and, after the fashion of the early years of the nineteenth century, instructed them in the rudiments of learning. Mr. McTavish had been a schoolmaster in his day, but illness and old age had overtaken him before he began to lay by his competence, and the poor-house became a necessary refuge. He admitted also, to those whom he took into his confidence, that lingering too long over the wassail-bowl had not a little to do with his financial misfortune. But he was able to teach the children of the poor-house much: and to Paul especially the winter's instruction was a god-send. The boy had a passion for study, and Sandy McTavish stimulated and satisfied it. Many an hour they spent together over Gould Brown's Grammar and Mitchell's Geography and Stoddard's Arithmetic.

"Takes to books," said Sandy to Paul's mother, "like a duck to water. Never have I seen a lad wi' such a capacity for larnin'."

So they came to be great friends, Paul and Sandy. And little by little the old man told the boy the story of his life, and in return Paul told him the brief tale of his boyhood.

It was Paul's account of his persecution and ostracism that appealed most strongly to the sympathies of the old schoolmaster.

"They used to call me 'Pink-Eye,'" said the boy, "and 'Grandaddy-Grayhead.' And when two or three of 'em got together they'd sing: —

"‘Pink-eye Paul had a fall,
His dad got tight,
So his hair turned white
In a single night,
An' that's all!’"

None of you notice it here," he continued, "an' that's why I'm happy here. But some day I've got to go out an' work for mother, an' then it'll be the same old 'Pink-Eye,' 'Poodle-Hair,' that it was before: an' they'll throw it up to me again that my father's a drunkard and a — a thief, and all the rest of it, and I can't stand it, Mr. McTavish, I can't stand it!"

The old man took half a dozen long puffs on his clay pipe before he answered, and then he spoke with much deliberation.

"Ye should na feel sa bad aboot it, lad. The sitooation is by no means beyond —

beyond redemption. Listen now. Some day, na doot, ye'll go to the big city. An' there's men in New York — verra skillful men, scientists, chemists, an' such — that can mak' your white hair a bonny brown, an' your skin as tawny as mine, and your eyes — well, I do not mind me noo of any method by which the color o' the eyes may be changed, but modern science has done wonderfu' things, wonderfu' things. Na doot ye could be transformed till yer ain mither would n't know ye."

During this recital Paul sat, with clasped hands, gazing on the schoolmaster, enraptured with the vision spread out before him.

"Mr. McTavish!" he exclaimed. "Oh, Mr. McTavish, are you sure? Are you sure? Why, that would be — would be — heaven."

"Oh, aye, lad! I dare say it could be accomplished, but it would take a powerful lot o' rubbin' an' powderin': aye, an' money, money."

"How much money, Mr. McTavish? How much?" He had risen to his feet and

stood facing the old man, breathless and eager.

“Oh, that I cannot say. The matter of a hunder dollars maybe, maybe more. Who knows? Skillfu’ men do not work for nae-thin’.”

“Then I shall get the hundred dollars, Mr. McTavish; I shall get it; I shall get it!”

He stood erect and threw his arms into the air as if already throwing off the burden that had oppressed him and borne him down.

“God prosper ye, lad, an’ bring ye into your ain!”

So a new hope dawned for this hopeless boy. From that hour he had one great ambition. It filled his mind by day and his dreams at night. He set one goal before him, to be reached through whatever storm or strife or struggle, and when that goal should be reached he would be — like other boys.

So time ran on. Spring came, and summer, and winter once again. But when the second autumn drew nigh the old disease with which Mollie Bolton had struggled in the years at the Gifford cottage grew once more acute, and on a still September day,

before the shadows of evening had fallen, she lay, with her thin hands crossed upon her breast, beyond all chance of mortal suffering or sorrow, forever and ever at rest.

Dead at the poor-house! There are other surroundings which make death more tragic or terrible. There are none which make it more pathetic. But she was loved by these people in her lifetime, and now in her death they honored her. The old clergyman who had known her and ministered to her at Redstone came down for the funeral, and all the inmates of the poor-house gathered to hear his simple and touching tribute to her memory. They buried her in the Redstone Graveyard, on the hill beyond the village, in a lot which had been purchased in better days, and in which for many years had lain the body of her baby girl.

And after it was all over, in the late afternoon, under a somber sky, Paul rode back to the poor-house, oppressed with his first great sorrow and the unspeakable loneliness which accompanied it.

CHAPTER III

THREE days after the funeral, Paul was summoned before the board of poor-directors, sitting in solemn conclave, and told that as he was now fourteen years of age, and strong and healthy, it was desirable that he should be looking forward to some permanent occupation; that it was not the policy of the board to retain at the poor-house persons who could be self-supporting, and that considering his own future welfare they had decided, as they had power to do, to bind him out as an apprentice. Then Paul surprised the president of the board by asking very courteously to what trade he was to be bound and who was to be his master.

“I was about to tell you,” was the reply, “that Mr. Lyman Gifford, of Redstone, has offered to accept you as an apprentice to the trade of farming. In fact the indenture of apprenticeship has already been signed and approved by two of our justices according to law. Mr. Gifford will board and clothe

you and will teach you the art, trade, and mystery of farming. He will provide you with three months of schooling in each year until you are sixteen years of age, and you will remain with him quietly and peaceably, giving full obedience to his orders as your master until you are twenty-one. Are you content?"

Paul did not at once reply. The announcement that he was to be Lyman Gifford's apprentice had fallen on him too suddenly to make ready speech possible. He knew, too well, that Mr. Gifford would be a hard master, and that his days of happiness and freedom were at an end.

"Are you content?" repeated the president of the board.

"I will do whatever you wish," replied Paul.

"Very well, Mr. Dibble will deliver you to Mr. Gifford to-morrow afternoon."

So Paul packed in his little hair-covered trunk all of his things except the personal belongings of his mother, which Mrs. Dibble kindly volunteered to keep for him, and the next afternoon he was ready to set out for his

new home. Before he went he strolled out to look for the last time on the familiar fields, the cattle, the sheep, the horses, and the dogs that he loved. He said good-bye to Mrs. Dibble, and she kissed him with motherly tears in her eyes. He said good-bye to Sandy McTavish, to the carpenter, to all who had known him and been kind to him, and then, with a heavy heart, he climbed to his seat in the wagon beside Mr. Dibble and they rode away.

It was late in the afternoon when they drove into the yard at Lyman Gifford's farmhouse. A big collie came barking out at them, and then a ten-year-old girl, with a mass of blonde curls floating at her back, ran down the path to call the dog back.

"Come here, Bob!" she cried. "You foolish dog!" She turned to the visitors. "He would n't hurt you," she assured them; "he's real kind. You're Paul Bolton, are n't you?" addressing the boy, and continuing before he had time to answer: "Well, papa's expectin' you. He is n't home. Melissa'll show you where to put your trunk."

So Paul, with Mr. Dibble's help, hoisted his trunk to his shoulder, and, preceded by the girl and the dog, started up the side path to the kitchen.

"I'm Ruth," said the girl, in an effort to be friendly. "I'm Mr. Gifford's daughter."

Apparently she had taken no notice of his unusual appearance. At any rate, she manifested no surprise.

"I knew you," she continued, "because I used to see you go by in the stage sometimes with Hamilton Polley."

At the kitchen door they met Melissa, the hired girl, tall, gaunt, and good-natured.

"Well, for the land's sake!" she exclaimed, as her eyes fell on Paul. "Are you the boy that's come to chore it for Mr. Gifford?"

"Yes," replied Paul, "I'm here to work."

As he lowered his trunk to the floor his cap fell off disclosing his abundance of white hair. Melissa lifted her hands in amazement.

"Goodness me!" she exclaimed again. "Where'd you git that head o' hair? Git scared at suthin'?"

Before Paul could reply Ruth exclaimed for him: "Oh, no, Melissa! He's always had it. It does n't hurt him any."

"Well, I never! Oh, you're to have the dark room at the top o' the stairs. Here, I'll give you a lift with that trunk."

She opened a door, disclosing a steep and narrow staircase, and taking hold of one end of the trunk helped Paul to carry it to his room. His room! It was not much like the light and pleasant room he had occupied at the poor-house. It was under the eaves of the kitchen wing, with just a horizontal slit of a window in it; a room against one wall of which only could he stand upright. There was a narrow corded bedstead in it, and a husk mattress and a pillow, and some thin bedclothing that had seen better days, and a rickety chair without its back. For the rest the room was bare, save for a barrel or two of paper-rags, some old pieces of stovepipe, and a few large ears of corn hung up by the husks to dry. When Melissa's head had disappeared down the steep declivity of the staircase, and Paul was left alone, there came over him for the first time in his

life a sensation of homesickness, that dreadful malady that attacks young and old, rich and poor alike, and racks the soul and threatens the body as does no other illness. He sat down on his trunk and rested his head in his hands, and yielded himself up to sad and bitter thought. The growing darkness crept in on him and shadowed him. A feeling of utter loneliness, such as he had never known in his life before, filled every atom of his being. If only he could lay his head for one moment in his mother's lap and sob out his grief to her as he used to do—but she was asleep, forever asleep; and the good God of whom she had so often told him seemed very far away. No wonder he laid his head on the edge of the narrow bed and wept. It was perhaps a half-hour later that Melissa opened the stair-door and called to him to come down to his supper. But he held fast to his voice while he replied that he was not hungry, only very tired, and that he would prefer to go right to bed. So, in the darkness, he took off his clothes and crept under the covers spread on the cornhusk mattress, and by and by, for nature is ever kind to the

young and healthy, by and by he forgot his sorrows in sound and refreshing sleep.

The next morning Paul was awakened before daylight by a knocking at his door. The hired man, who slept in the large gable room in front of his, had stopped on his way downstairs to call him, and left a candle with him by which he might see to dress. At the basin on the bench outside the kitchen door he washed his face and hands, and then he and Melissa and the hired man sat down to their breakfast as the day was dawning. While they were thus engaged Mrs. Gifford came into the room. She stepped quickly and appeared to be nervous, for although she looked to be plump and healthy, she felt that she was very much of an invalid, and, as Melissa said, she was "everlastin'ly complainin'."

When she caught sight of Paul, she stopped for a moment and stared at him.

"I suppose you're the Bolton boy," she said finally. "What's your name?"

"Paul, if you please," replied the boy.

"Well, Paul, I don't think much of albinos. The only other one I ever knew or

heard of lied and stole before he was fifteen. But we'll do the best we can by you and run the risk. I can't see what Mr. Gifford wanted to take you for, anyway. We've got a houseful now, what with our own people and Aunt Emma and William, and the hired help. Mr. Gifford's always doing some foolish thing like that, but we'll do the best we can by you. I had an awful night last night, Melissa, with Mr. Gifford away and all. I thought I never would get my heart to beating right. Some day it's going to break. I know it will." And she bustled noisily out of the room.

There was a joke or two between Melissa and James, the hired man, over what they conceived to be Mrs. Gifford's fancied illness, and then breakfast was over.

Though Mr. Gifford had not yet returned, he had left orders, nevertheless, concerning Paul's tasks. The apprentice was to do the morning chores, bring the wood and water, help milk the cows, clean the stables, curry the horses, and feed the stock. After that he was to go into the field with the men and assist them with their work to the best

of his ability and strength, and to do the chores again at night.

Paul found his day a strenuous one, indeed. He had never before been put to such severity of labor, and long before night came he was worn out with his exertions. But youth has resilient muscles and a hopeful heart, and the next day's tasks, while differing little from those of the first day, did not seem quite so hard. And, as the days went on, Paul bent to his work with such willingness and energy that the burden of it, though resting heavily on him, was never more than he could bear. Exacting and severe as Lyman Gifford was, quick as he was to discover laxity or lack of judgment on the part of those who were in his service, there was little fault that he could justly find with Paul.

Early in October the fall term of the public school at Redstone began, and, in accordance with his contract with the directors of the poor, Mr. Gifford made arrangements for Paul to attend. The boy was to get up earlier, indeed, and work before breakfast so that he might have his chores finished in

time to start for school, and he was to work later at night after supper to complete his evening tasks. But Paul did not mind that if only he could get the schooling which he so greatly desired.

It was nevertheless with deep misgivings that, dinner-pail in hand, he started to school on a certain Monday morning in October. He knew that he would have to meet the old scornful staring, the old cruel jests and gibes, the old insolent attacks, perhaps, but he had resolved to suffer them, and be patient and brave, looking to the end.

When Paul reached the schoolhouse at the village he found Ruth already there, and she introduced him to the teacher, who treated him kindly and inquired as to his attainments. She was amazed to find him so far advanced, and she soon decided that in order to be of any service to him she must teach him separately, at least until, with the advent of winter, the older boys and girls should come in. She advised him as to the books that he would need, planned certain work for him to do that morning, and then gave her attention to the other pupils.

Aside from prolonged staring and whispered comments, Paul was not annoyed during the morning by his schoolfellows. At the noon intermission he sought a secluded spot in a field near by and ate his luncheon alone and in peace. When he returned to the school-house a group of boys had already gathered in the school-yard evidently bent on mischief. It was apparent that they had picked up much information concerning him during the noon recess. When he approached they began to whisper to each other, and one of the bolder ones asked him how long he had been out of the poor-house.

"Three weeks," replied Paul.

"Who taught you there?" was the next question.

"Alexander McTavish," was the reply.

"Did he teach you manners?"

"Certainly."

"Then take off your cap when you're talkin' to gentlemen."

Paul removed his cap as he was bidden to do, and amid jests and gibes concerning his white hair, he passed on into the school-room. This was bad enough surely, but

worse was to come when school was over for the day. At the tap of the bell the boys hurried from the room, and when Paul came out, dinner-pail in hand, they were lined up on each side of the path awaiting him. Emboldened by his quiet demeanor at the noon hour they had evidently resolved to go much further in the way of annoying him. With a mock effort at protection one of them advanced and took his arm as he descended the steps, and then suddenly wheeled him around to face his tormentors.

"Say," said a small boy, "I've got a white rabbit home with pink eyes, looks just like you. Any relation? Ain't your dad, is he?"

"No," answered Paul quietly, when the laugh had subsided, "but I like white rabbits."

"Where is your dad, anyway?" piped up another.

"That's none of your business," was the quick reply.

Paul could be patient when his own defects were ridiculed, but he could not calmly hear reflections on his father.

"Yes, it is our business," spoke up the

largest boy in the group. "We don't want any sons of jail-birds goin' to school with us."

"Nor poor-house paupers," added another.

"Nor white niggers," cried a third.

This was too much. Paul's blood was up at last. A little spot of red glowed through the whiteness of each cheek, and his pink-red eyes shot fire.

"You're a set of contemptible cowards!" he exclaimed, as they gathered around him. "Get out of my way!"

And when they would not get out of his way, but crowded still closer around him, he thrust out his free right hand and pushed them forcibly back. Then the big boy flung himself upon Paul and bore him heavily to the ground. For a moment it was nip and tuck. But Paul, with his hardened muscles and powerful physique, soon had his antagonist at his mercy, beneath him, pinned fast to the ground. The other boys, seeing that their leader was in danger, now plunged to his rescue. The fight was fierce but short. For, just as victory was about to rest on the banners of the allied forces, the teacher

appeared in the doorway of the schoolroom. She took in the situation at a glance, ran down to the mass of struggling boys and began pulling them right and left.

"Job! Ralph! Henry!" she cried: "get up this minute, all of you. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!"

Slowly the mass of boys resolved itself into its individual elements, and when finally he was free, Paul struggled to his feet.

"He pitched into us first, Miss Gordon," explained one of the group.

"And you tantalized him into doing it," replied the teacher. "Now, go home, every one of you."

Paul stood silent, making no defense. He was hurt, bruised, bleeding in body and spirit. Miss Gordon laid her hand kindly on his arm.

"Paul," she said, "I am sorry this happened."

"It will never happen again, Miss Gordon," he replied. And he picked up his cap and dinner-pail and limped slowly down the road and across the fields to his master's home.

The first person whom he met when he entered the Gifford kitchen was Mrs. Gifford. When she saw him she held up her hands in consternation. And well she might. His clothing was soiled and torn. His dinner-pail was battered and its cover entirely gone. His face was purple with bruises and his white hair was dabbled with blood.

"Paul Bolton!" she exclaimed, "what have you been doing?"

"I have been fighting, Mrs. Gifford."

"Well, I should say so. Just look at your clothes."

Paul regarded his clothes regretfully. He had not noticed before how badly they were soiled and torn.

"And look at your face!" she added.

He could not look at his face, but he could judge from the way it felt that Mrs. Gifford's surprise was fully justified.

"Go wash yourself at once," she commanded, "and get your old clothes on. How ever this suit is to be fixed up I don't know. I can't see, for the life of me, whatever possessed Mr. Gifford to take such a person into his house!"

Just at this moment Ruth came bounding in. She had not seen the encounter, having been excused early from school, but she had heard of it.

"It was n't his fault, mother!" she exclaimed. "The boys teased him and picked on him and slapped him, and he had to fight 'em. Did n't you, Paul? And he licked Ben Babbitt, too; did n't you, Paul? And I'm so glad, for Ben's such a big bully."

"Ruth Gifford," commanded her mother, "hold your tongue! It's bad enough to have such a person as this in the house, let alone upholding him in his misdeeds."

So Ruth was silenced, and Paul went out to the wash-basin on the bench to remove as far as possible the evidences of his recent encounter.

When Lyman Gifford was told about the fight, he said little, but a grim smile came into the corners of his mouth, and it was apparent that he was not greatly displeased at the result of Paul's first day in school. The smile was still on his mouth when Paul approached him boldly, early on the following morning.

“Mr. Gifford,” said the boy, “if it’s all the same to you, I had rather not go to school again.”

Mr. Gifford may not have expected this announcement, but, at any rate, he manifested neither surprise nor displeasure. Mr. Gifford had a long head. If the boy refused to go to school, it was not his fault. He at least had done his duty under his contract with the poor-directors by trying to send him. And it stood to reason that a strong boy, above fourteen years of age, could do much more work on a farm if he spent a whole day at it than he could if six hours of the day were passed in the schoolroom; to say nothing of the time occupied in going and coming. So, naturally, Mr. Gifford was not vexed. But he did not choose to disclose this particular state of his mind to the boy, so he replied sternly: —

“What put that into your head? Why should n’t you go to school?”

“Because, sir, the boys pick on me and abuse me and it’s a dozen to one, and I’m not willing to stand it.”

“Nonsense! You’ll have to get used to

that sort of thing. You must consider your unfortunate personal defect. You must remember that your father is — a — not all that he should be. And in view of your lowly condition in life you must be patient and — and humble.”

“But I’m not humble, sir, and I can’t help my looks, and I’m not responsible for my father, and I don’t want to go where I’ve got to have these things all the time thrown up to me. If you please, sir, I’d rather not go to school again.”

“Oh, very well. I’ve done my duty by you. If you prefer farm-work to schooling, that’s your choice, not mine. If you want work, you shall have it.”

And Paul did have it. He had it from daylight to dark. He had it every day without cessation. There were no holidays for him, no breathing spells, no chance to spend a penny had he been fortunate enough to get it. But Lyman Gifford gave him no money. His contract, now that the question of schooling was out of the way, called only for board, clothes, and work, and he proposed to live up to the letter of the contract.

There was, indeed, a brief period of rest on Sunday between the morning and evening tasks, when Paul was made to put on his best clothes and walk alone to the church at Redstone, and sit in the gallery in a corner by himself, and listen to sermons that he could not understand. But he always slipped out while the last hymn was being sung, so that he should not come into contact with the worshipers, and made his way back as he had come, alone, by the path that led through fields to the Gifford homestead.

And so the days passed by, each one filled more full with tasks, more full with loneliness and bitterness and a longing to escape from the hard and domineering supervision and unconcealed contempt of Lyman Gifford, and from the incessant scolding of his wife. James, the hired man, and Melissa were kind enough to him in their way, and sometimes went to daring lengths to lighten for him an unbearable task. And once, when the day's work had been harder than usual, and the master's condemnation had been more severe, and Paul's mistress had scolded him freely because at that moment there

appeared to be no one else to scold, and, exhausted with labor and longing, he had dragged himself up to his bare, cold room under the kitchen eaves, and for the first time since that unhappy night of his arrival at the Gifford house he had given way to uncontrollable tears; then it was that Melissa, hearing his sobs from the kitchen below, had climbed the attic stairs to his room, and, because she was a woman and had a woman's heart, she smoothed back with her rough, toil-worn hand the white hair that had burdened his life, and comforted him as best she could, and bade him try to be cheerful and content until haply a better day should dawn.

But no better day ever dawned on Paul's life at the Gifford farm. The autumn days went by with their soft sweet winds and glorious colors, but their beauty was lost to him. He had no time to wonder or be glad. November came with its dark and frosty mornings, its dried leaves scurrying along the road, its gray and cheerless skies, and its sharp reminder of the ice and snow that soon would hold the country in its death-cold

grip. The season's tasks on the farm were well-nigh done, but for Paul there was no relaxation. Long before daylight every morning he crept shivering down the attic stairs to bring the wood and light the fire that should prepare the way for breakfast. And every night, after his day's hard tasks were ended, he stumbled wearily up the same stairs to his bed in the dark. He was not allowed to have a candle. The master and mistress of the house affected to believe that albinos were of such an irresponsible temperament that it was not safe to entrust them with candles. Besides, it cost time and money to make a tallow dip. Yet there was a lighted candle in his soul, burning ever so faintly, the light of a wild, suppressed desire to shake off the burdens and the tasks, and the unbearable contumely with which he was so sore beset, and somehow, somewhere, to be free. It wanted but an instigating breath to bring that candle to a blaze which should set his soul on fire.

One day, in the public road, as he was plodding down from a neighboring farm, laden with a bag of buckwheat flour for

which he had been sent, he was overtaken by Hamilton Polley and the Redstone stage. It was only by chance and stealth in these days that he was able to see and talk with his old friend, for there was no love between the stage-driver and the owner of the Gifford farm.

“Hey, there!” cried Polley, pulling up the team with a flourish. “What ye blockin’ up the road fer? Git in here out o’ the way, dog-gone ye!”

In response to this invitation the boy deposited his load in the wagon, and climbed up to a seat beside the driver. There were no passengers, so they could talk as they chose.

“Well,” inquired Hamilton, as they jogged along, “how’s old Shylock behavin’ ’imself now?”

“About the same,” replied Paul; “only I think I can stand it better now. I guess it’s true what Sam Safford said up at Redstone the other day, that I ain’t human like other folks, and that I don’t deserve any better treatment.”

“You tell Sam Safford to go — where they

ain't no ice. No, I'll tell 'im myself. I'd ruther. But it's old skin-flint I'm askin' about. Did he send you fer that bag o' buckwheat?"

"Yes."

"Where's the hoss?"

"In the stable."

"An' the buggy?"

"In the shed."

"That's Lyme Gifford to a *t*. Save a hoss an' kill a boy. I said we'n he got red o' sendin' ye to school —"

"I stopped school myself, Mr. Polley."

"Oh, I know all about that. I said w'en he got red o' sendin' ye to school, 'at he cal'lated to eddicate ye in the science o' hard work, an', by cracky! he's done it. Consarn his stingy soul — ef he's got a soul. Say," after a pause, "w'y don't ye cut stick an' run? Nobody 'd blame ye."

"What's cut stick, Mr. Polley?"

"Clear out — git — vamoose the ranch."

"I've thought about it a little. But where could I go? The law gives him a right to catch me an' bring me back."

"Go to Jersey. They say they ain't much

law down there. An' w'en ye git that fer, heel 'er fer New York."

"But I have n't any money."

"Never you mind. W'en you git good an' ready to go, you jest let Ham Polley know. He owes Lyme Gifford a little suthin'; he'll pay it that way."

"Thank you, Mr. Polley. I'll think about it. And some day I'll go. I'll go."

"That's the talk; you do what I tell ye, cut stick an' run away."

Before they reached the Gifford farmhouse Polley pulled up his horses and let Paul out, lest, if he should be seen riding in the stage, there would be fresh trouble. But as the boy trudged along the road the stage-driver's words of advice kept sounding in his ears: "Cut stick an' run. Cut stick an' run." It was the breath that was destined to blow into a blaze the feeble flame of the candle in his soul.

CHAPTER IV

THE one light that shone through the darkness of Paul's life during these days was the sturdy and unfaltering friendship of the daughter of the house, Ruth Gifford. From some remote ancestor it may be, — certainly it was from neither of her parents, — she had inherited a sympathy for all weak and helpless and overburdened things, whether the beasts of the farm or the human beings that toiled there. So, scorning ridicule and braving opposition, she had befriended Paul whenever and wherever the opportunity arose. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that in the boy's heart there grew up a loyalty and devotion to this child of forbidding parents that never, to the last day of his life, departed from him.

She met him that November afternoon when he was staggering home with the bag of buckwheat flour on his shoulder, just as he was turning from the roadway into the

path that led to the kitchen door. She saw that it was too great a burden for a boy of his years to carry, and she begged him to lay it down for a moment on the carriage steps at the roadside and rest. He was not unwilling to comply with her request, and, after a word of assurance as to his strength, he did so. The rising wind was blowing her curls about her face, her walk in the raw, cold air had heightened the color in her cheeks, and her eyes were big and tender with sympathy.

"Never mind," she said; "when you get to be a big man they won't dare to treat you this way."

"When I get to be a big man," replied the boy gravely, "I won't be this way, white and pink like this, and then I'll be treated as other men are. All it needs to change me is money. Sandy McTavish said so, and he knows."

"How much money, Paul?"

"I don't know. Mr. McTavish did n't know. Maybe a hundred dollars. Maybe five hundred. Maybe fifty dollars a month as long as I live. I don't care how much it is,

I'm going to get it. I can't be a slave like this much longer, and I'm going to get that money."

"Paul," — she looked up at him anxiously, — "you — you mean you're going to get it honestly, don't you?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so. I had n't thought about any other way. I suppose I'll get it honestly."

"Of course. Father says that no dishonest dollar ever did anybody any good, and that all boys and girls should learn that the first thing. You know he's very honest, father is."

The boy gazed down upon her incredulously. All of the wrongs he had suffered at the hands of Lyman Gifford rose up before him. All the bitter tirades of Hamilton Polley swept back into his mind. Impulsive and involuntary words rushed to his tongue: —

"Oh, is he? Did your father get all of his money honestly? And all his land and houses and barns and everything? Is the money he's making off o' my work while he's treatin' me like a slave honest money? You

know what Ham Polley calls it? He calls it blood money."

"Paul!"

She looked up at him with eyes that expressed both grief and anger. And then he realized what he had said and was both sorry and ashamed.

"Ruth! I did n't mean it. I ought not to have said it. I'm sorry. I know he's good to you. I know —"

But she was backing away from him with defiant face and unforgiving words.

"You've said it. You're a bad boy! I shall not speak to you again."

And she did not speak to him for many years.

So his quick tongue and his harsh words had deprived him of the one friend in the household, without whose friendship his life would be desolate and hard beyond any desolation or hardship he had hitherto known. He shouldered his burden again and started toward the house; but the burden that pressed down upon his heart in that moment of desertion and despair was comparable in bitter weight to no physical

burden that he had ever borne or was ever likely to bear.

He entered the kitchen door in the dusk of the November day only to be scolded by his mistress for his lateness in coming. Then his master came in and ordered him to the barn to throw down hay for the cattle before dark. And he told him to be sure to stop at the smokehouse on his way back, and smother the corn-cob fire there, lest, in the high wind that was blowing, it might flame up and set the building on fire. So Paul went to the barn and climbed up into the mow, feeling his way in the darkness, and threw down hay for the cattle, and carried it to the sheds. And all the time he kept repeating to himself: "Why don't you cut stick and run?" Why not, indeed? He was going some time, why not now? Why not this very night? The thought, sweet and daring, grew up with amazing quickness and filled his thoughts. It crowded out all other thoughts. It crowded out the admonition of his master concerning the smokehouse fire. The order was clean forgotten. He trudged back to the house through the gathering

darkness, through the blustering wind, under the ragged and scurrying cloud-drifts, to perform his final tasks for the day. First he must carry wood into the sitting-room and pile it up in the corner of the fireplace to replenish the evening fire. When he came into this room, staggering under his burden of wood, he saw a stranger sitting at the table with Lyman Gifford, and his quick ear caught scraps of their conversation as he laid the sticks in place. Evidently the stranger was the man who had bought Mr. Gifford's back farm on the Gibsontown road. James had told him about the reported sale, and they had both hoped that the report was true so that there would be no more journeying there to work. When Paul came in with another load of wood, Mr. Gifford was counting money. It was in the form of bank-bills, and he was scrutinizing closely every note that he counted, for in those days of state banks it was very easy to be deceived as to the value or validity of paper currency. Indeed, there were some of the bills that he refused to accept, and the stranger was obliged to replace them with others.

“That’s five hundred down,” said Mr. Gifford, when the counting was finally completed; “and on the first day of January you pay me five hundred more with interest, and after that —”

But he did not complete the sentence. There was some sudden excitement outside, and some one was shouting. Then Mrs. Gifford plunged into the room exclaiming: —

“Lyman! The smokehouse is on fire. We’ll all be burned to death!”

And she dropped into a chair with a hand pressed against her palpitating heart. Mr. Gifford crumpled the money in his hand, thrust it hurriedly into a little drawer in the upper part of an old-fashioned writing-desk and bureau, closed and locked the drop leaf, and rushed from the room, accompanied by the purchaser of the back farm.

But Paul stood transfixed with fright and self-conviction. It had flashed on him when Mrs. Gifford made her dramatic entrance, before she had spoken a word, that the smokehouse had taken fire as a result of his carelessness. What would be the penalty? He did not wait to answer his own question.

Recovering his presence of mind, he dashed out through the kitchen to the yard. He seized a pail that was standing there, filled it from the rain-barrel under the eaves, and ran and threw the water on the fire, and repeated the process until the barrel was exhausted. The two men, reinforced by James and Melissa, were also fighting the fire with every means at their command. But the smokehouse was doomed. Dry as a dead leaf, charred by the heat of many smouldering fires, its first burst into flame settled its fate, as well as the fate of the dozen plump hams suspended from its joists. The building, owing to the uses to which it was to be put, had been isolated, and even the high wind which was blowing did not carry the flames far enough to endanger other buildings in the vicinity.

But the flying sparks and cinders had still to be watched, and the smoking ruins drenched, as a precaution against further danger. And when the rest of the family returned to the house to eat a belated supper, Paul was left alone to guard the smouldering wreck. As yet Lyman Gifford had

said nothing to him concerning the origin of the fire. It was not Mr. Gifford's habit to follow a fault with immediate reproof, or an offense with swift retribution. He preferred to take time to prepare his words of condemnation and to decide upon his form of punishment. He found that by doing so results were always more satisfactory. So Paul knew that because his master had not yet spoken to him about the fire, it did not by any means follow that he was to escape condemnation for his carelessness. He knew that in one form or another it was bound to come. Once, as he paced up and down beside the smokehouse ruins, it occurred to him that now would be the time to "cut stick and run," now, this very moment, before the hour of retribution should strike. And then the manliness in him prevailed. He felt that this disaster was due wholly to his neglect, and that it was his place, as a man, to remain and accept the consequences of his fault.

Perhaps it was a half-hour, possibly it was an hour, that he walked back and forth in the cold and darkness, thinly clad, shivering

to the marrow of his bones, apprehensive and despairing.

Then Lyman Gifford came out to him. He carried a lantern; and when he reached Paul he held the lantern up so that the light of it shone full into the boy's face. He spoke deliberately enough, but the tone of his voice was portentous.

"Well, what have you to say?"

"Nothing," replied Paul, "except that it was my fault and I'm sorry. I forgot to smother the fire."

"Of course you forgot. And if you're not sorry, you will be. But what I want to know is what you propose to do about it. My smokehouse is burned up. A dozen hams are destroyed. What do you propose to do about it?"

His voice rose as he went on, and by the light which the lantern cast on his face Paul could see that he was excited and angry.

"I'm willing to do anything I can," replied the boy. "I don't know as there's much I can do. I have n't got any money and no one to let me have any, and I work now as hard as I'm able to."

"You don't have to tell me," exclaimed the man, "how hard you work; that's all your kind are fit for. You don't have to tell me you're a pauper; I know it. You don't have to tell me that your drunken father can't furnish you with money; the whole county knows that."

And then a flame of resentment was lighted in Paul's breast.

"You have no right to say that to me," he answered. "I'm your apprentice, but I'm not your slave."

At this reply the man's anger got completely beyond his control.

"I'll teach you what you are!" he shouted. "You pauper brat! You white-haired monstrosity!"

By the light of the lantern Paul could see that his master's face was distorted with rage, and that his free hand was clenched as if to strike a blow. Yet the boy was not afraid. A new spirit of defiance and fearlessness had sprung up suddenly within him, and he dared to say such things as he had never dreamed of before.

"I'll pay you for the damage I've done

you," he said; "some day I'll pay you, and I'll double-pay you if you want; and some day you'll pay me and double-pay me for the things you've said to me to-night; and that's just as sure as we both live, Mr. Lyman Gifford!"

And then Mr. Lyman Gifford, unable longer to confine his anger to words, thrust a strong right arm out through the darkness, and almost before Paul knew it he was in his master's grip, caught by the neckband of his shirt, choked and shaken, and half-pushed, half-dragged to the kitchen of the farmhouse, where, with one final thrust, he went prone to the floor. The master, his rage partly spent, strode on into the sitting-room, and the boy, released from the steel-like grip, sprang to his feet and stood erect with blazing eyes and heart hot with indignation.

It was the first time in his life that any grown person had laid violent hands on him, and the thing angered him beyond measure. Besides, the whole family, save Ruth, was in the kitchen when he was dragged in and thrown to the floor, and saw it all. And that was unbearable.

“It serves him right!” exclaimed Mrs. Gifford. “Such a shamefully careless boy! Letting Mr. Gifford’s property burn up, after all he’s done for him, and giving me such a turn with my weak heart. Go to bed this minute,” she added, addressing Paul, “and don’t let me hear another word from you till morning.” And she, too, bustled from the room.

Melissa would have given the boy something to eat, but he was in no mood to take food. A stronger passion than hunger was in possession of him now. And obeying his own impulse rather than Mrs. Gifford’s command, he climbed up the attic stairs to his dark room. He felt for the broken chair and sat down on it, his hands gripping its rim, and stared into the darkness and tried to think. He did not attempt to excuse his negligence. He frankly admitted to himself that he was to blame for the loss to his master; but deliberate arson would scarcely have deserved the treatment he had received. He felt that he had been outraged in body and soul; that the limit of his endurance had been reached and passed, and that this night must see the

severance of his connection with Lyman Gifford. This night he must "cut stick and run away." How? Where? To what point of the compass could he go where they would not find him on the morrow and bring him back, as the law permitted them to do, to suffer greater wrongs and deeper humiliation. Hamilton Polley had said "to Jersey." But where was Jersey, and how long would it take him, walking by night and hiding by day, to get there? And what would he eat on the way? And if by great good fortune he should reach that haven, would he not still be that "white monstrosity" that Lyman Gifford had called him, subject as always to ridicule and scorn and oppression? Oh, if only he had money! If only he had enough to transform him into a normal American boy! If only he had enough to pay his way to the great city! If only he had enough to take the train at Mooresville and speed away anywhere from the reach of Lyman Gifford and the law! But, alas! he had not a single penny in his possession. And there was not a person in the world whom he could ask for it, unless it might be Hamilton

Polley, who had promised to help him. But long before he could reach Hamilton Polley's house this night, that good friend would be wrapped in his slumbers.

So he sat on and on: staring into the darkness, turning these things over in his mind, but reaching no conclusion. It was icy cold in the room, but he did not feel the cold. His nerves were tingling with excitement, his heart was hot with indignation and resolve, and his blood was pulsing through his arteries with feverish rapidity. He heard the clock in the kitchen strike ten. He heard James come stumbling up the attic stairs to bed. He heard some one bolt the kitchen door and fix the stove for the night, and not long afterward the monotonous sound of heavy snoring came to his ears from somewhere in the house.

Still he had not formulated any feasible plan of escape. Perhaps it was impossible to do so. Perhaps, after all, it would be better for him to stay here and face Lyman Gifford's wrath and Mrs. Gifford's contempt, and bear it all patiently and bravely until a better opportunity to escape should present itself.

Oh, well! He rose and stretched himself, for he had been sitting long. The muscles of his neck were painful; they had been wrenched in the scuffle. And on his thigh was a bruise where he had struck a kitchen chair in falling. He unbuttoned his torn jacket and started to remove it. He had one arm already out, when a new thought struck him, an idea so brilliant, so reckless, so wicked that at first he hardly dared admit it to his mind. Nevertheless, he put his arm back into the sleeve of his jacket and sat down. And little by little, the new scheme found lodgment in his brain. Had he not seen Lyman Gifford thrust the money paid for the back farm into a drawer in the top of the bureau and close the front and lock it? Suppose — just suppose, without actually intending to do it — he should slip downstairs in his stocking feet, make his way into the sitting-room, pick the lock of the bureau and find the money and take it. He could leave the house, walk to Mooresville before daylight, take the early train there, and be in Jersey, or even in the great city of New York, before Lyman Gifford had finished

searching for him among the adjoining farms. Five hundred dollars! It was a king's fortune. It would buy American manhood for him. It would give him a place shoulder to shoulder, hand to hand, heart to heart with other boys, with other men.

Stealing? Of course, it would be stealing. But it would be stealing from Lyman Gifford, and had not Lyman Gifford robbed him, Paul Bolton, of every liberty, of every dignity, of every right to which an American boy is entitled? What was that old saying about "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"? Had not his mother read it to him from the Holy Scriptures? Oh, but the sophistries of Satan are subtle. Yet in this boy's breast there was no great struggle against temptation. His training and environment had not been such as to develop in him that fine sensitiveness of conscience which under better conditions forms the solid foundation of American manhood. To Paul Bolton, this night, in this emergency, in the whirlpool of this tribulation, the question was one of expediency and daring rather than of morals. And when he had weighed it

and decided, his decision was that he would dare to attempt the unlawful accomplishment of his desire.

His mind once made up, Paul acted quickly. It was high time that he should be busy, for he had spent hours in deliberation, and the kitchen clock had already struck the hour of twelve. He stripped off his soiled and torn clothing and worn-out boots, felt out in the dark his Sunday clothes and put them on, took his new shoes in his hand, and crept downstairs in his stocking feet. He made his way across the kitchen by the light of the few dying embers in the stove, and then, a new thought coming into his mind, he turned and went back to the kitchen sink. Under it the tin spout that led to the waste barrel outside had been wired fast. He carefully untwisted this piece of wire, straightened it, bent one end into a short right angle, twisted the other end crosswise for leverage, and lo! he had a master key. Then he passed on through an open door into the sitting-room. Here it was entirely dark and he moved slowly. Once his knee hit the corner of a rocking-chair and made a trifling noise,

and for a full minute he stood still and held his breath. He knew that the sleeping-room of his master and mistress opened from the hall between this room and the parlor, and that the door was usually ajar. When he was assured that no one had heard him, he continued on his journey across the room. He knew the location of the bureau, and when he touched it he knew on what part of it his fingers rested. It was still locked. He inserted his self-made key into the keyhole, but all his effort failed to make it work effectively. Then he took his jack-knife from his pocket, ran the small blade along the crack where the lid closed till it struck the bolt, and by gentle manipulation, aided by the pressure of his key, he succeeded in forcing the bolt gradually back until, with a final faint click, it dropped free from the socket. He had not studied locks in vain. He dropped the lid and began his search for the drawer which contained the money. There was a nest of little drawers in the desk and he opened and ransacked three and found nothing. He began to think that Mr. Gifford had removed the bills to a safer

place. Then, in the fourth drawer, his fingers touched the bunch of loosely folded bank-notes. He had not before known the feeling of paper money, but he knew he could not be mistaken concerning the character of that which he now held in his hand. He thrust the parcel into the pocket of his trousers, pushed the drawer back where it belonged, closed the leaf of the bureau, and with the aid of his knife and wire key worked the bolt back into place. No professional burglar could have done the job with greater skill or more complete success. He did not make a single unnecessary or futile movement. He was resolutely clear-headed, conscienceless, and at ease. It was the one debasingly criminal experience of his life, entered into with calm deliberation and carried out with cold-blooded ingenuity, but never afterward thought of without a blush of shame and a sense of loathing.

To escape from the house was easy. He felt his way back across the sitting-room into the kitchen, picked up his shoes from the place where he had left them after coming downstairs, put them on, unbolted the

kitchen door, and passed out into the cold and starless night. Once on the open road he turned his face toward Mooresville, eight miles away. He did not run, he did not even hurry. He knew that he had plenty of time within which to get to the town before the morning train would reach there, and he had no fear that he would be followed. He started out with a steady, swinging gait, and kept it up as the miles grew behind him. He met no person nor any living thing, save that as he passed one farmhouse a dog barked at him from the shelter of the yard. In the woods that he passed through, the darkness was intense, but he kept the road with little trouble. He did not stop anywhere to rest. He did not at any stage of the journey feel tired or hungry. The lure of the future drew him on. He felt that the accomplishment of his wildest hopes and dreams was just ahead of him, and the exhilaration of that feeling drowned out every sensation of weariness or hunger or fear or the hurt of an outraged conscience.

When he reached the straggling row of houses, some of them lighted, that marked

the entrance to the town, he knew that morning was at hand. Beyond the tops of the hills that rose precipitously on the other side of the stream, the sky was beginning to show gray. In the barnyard of one house that he passed roosters were crowing vociferously. Now and then a man, hurrying to his work, met or passed the boy, but no one accosted him. For the most part the streets were deserted, and the flagstone pavement echoed to the tread of his feet as he marched steadily on. He turned into the main street of the town and followed it to the end, and at the end lay the railroad station, the terminus of the first stage in his journey to freedom.

CHAPTER V

WHEN Paul reached the railroad station he found that it was not lighted and that there was no one about. So he sat down on the edge of the platform and waited. By and by he began to realize that he was tired, and hungry as well. The night had been severely cold for November and the wind was still blowing briskly. He moved around to the sheltered side of the building next the tracks and again seated himself.

At his feet lay a little pool of water that had frozen roughly over, and he began to break the ice with the heels of his shoes. The glow induced by walking died slowly away, and he shrugged his shoulders and pulled the collar of his jacket up about his neck for warmth. Cold, weariness, hunger began to have their depressing effect on his spirits. Across the street, opposite the end of the station, was a building, partially lighted, over the door of which was a sign that read:

"Depot Hotel." Paul thought he would go over there and try to get something to eat. At any rate, it would be warmer there than here on the platform, and probably they could tell him something about the train. It was almost daylight now, but the sky was overcast and forbidding. He rose and started along the track by the edge of the platform to cross the street. As he did so a man, coming by the end of the station building and hitherto out of sight, walked squarely into him.

"I beg your pardon," said the man, as Paul started back in surprise and fright, "I did n't mean to — why, Paul, my boy!"

"Father!"

The recognition was mutual and, complete. For a moment both of them were too greatly surprised to speak more. Then Paul said: —

"Why, father, I did n't know that you were — were —"

"Out of prison? Yes. I got out three days ago. I had four months off for good behavior, you know."

The man's voice was just as quiet and

gentle as of old, but he had changed somewhat in appearance. His face was pallid and gaunt, and the hair at each side of his head was tinged with gray. He was very plainly dressed, except that a flowing black tie adorned his slightly soiled linen collar. He was without an overcoat, and he shivered and rubbed his hands together as he stood there in the biting wind.

"But, Paul," he continued, "why are you here? I heard that you had been bound out to Lyman Gifford."

"I have been," replied the boy; "but I — well, I ran away from him this morning."

"Ran away? That's strange! Here, let's sit down on the platform while you tell me about it."

They went and sat on the edge of the platform on the side of the building sheltered from the wind.

"Now, tell me about it," continued the man. "Was he unkind to you? Did he whip you? Or anything like that?"

"Oh, never but once; and then maybe it was my fault. But, father, I can't bear to be treated like a dog, even though I do make

mistakes, and even though I have got white hair and pink eyes."

The man reached out and took Paul's hand in his and held it affectionately.

"I don't blame you," he said. "You've had a hard life, and it's been my fault — my fault. The whole sad tragedy — your mother —"

"You know she died at the poor-house?"

"I know. I know. They wrote me. I tried to get away to see her for the last time, even to see her body put into the earth; but it was no use. They would n't let me come. I do not know that she would have forgiven me. Her hard life was due to my neglect of her; even her untimely death can be laid at my door. And she was the gentlest and sweetest woman that ever drew breath. Oh, it was shameful! It was pitiful — pitiful!"

The man's grief was apparently so deep and sincere that Paul's sympathies were moved.

"I don't think she ever laid it up against you," he said, in an attempt to be comforting. "I never heard her say any but the kindest things about you."

"That's because she was an angel, Paul; one of God's dear angels."

His voice broke, he drew a soiled handkerchief from his pocket, held it to his eyes, and gave way to a fit of violent weeping. Paul's tender heart was stirred with compassion. He did not know how superficial even genuine grief may be. He only knew that Richard Bolton was his father, and had been unfortunate, and was entitled to the sympathy of his son. He laid a comforting hand on the man's arm.

"Never mind," he said. "It can't be helped now. We'll both of us start new."

"Well said, my boy. We'll start new. What are you going to do? I forgot to ask you."

Paul hesitated a moment before replying; but he saw no real reason why he should not disclose his plans to his father, so he said, frankly: —

"I'm going to New York. Sandy McTavish said I could get my eyes and hair fixed up down there so that no one'd know me. I'm going to do that first."

"Fine! But that's going to cost some-

thing. Why, your railroad fare to New York alone will cost you about four dollars. Have you got the money?"

"Well, — I have a little money. Enough to pay my fare, anyway."

"Good! How did you manage to save it up?"

"I did n't save it."

"Somebody give it to you?"

"No."

"Then how did you get it?"

"Don't ask me, father. I'd rather not tell. I have it; that's enough."

After that, for a moment, neither of them spoke. If Richard Bolton had a suspicion concerning the source of his son's wealth he did not manifest it. But a new expression had already come into his face; an eager, hungry light that Paul had never seen before shone from his eyes. He grasped the boy's arm as he spoke: —

"Paul, have you enough to buy me a meal, a place by the fire for an hour? I'm freezing. I'm starving. I have n't a penny. I was thrown out of that hotel over there last evening, because I was penniless. I've

walked the streets all night, waiting for morning to come so that I could beg for something to eat. Paul!"

The beseeching earnestness of the man pierced to the depths of Paul's tender heart.

"Why, yes, father. Yes, I have enough. I'm hungry, too. We'll both get breakfast if there's time, and get warm and — why can't you come with me to New York and we'll make our new start together?"

Bolton did not answer the question. He rose hurriedly to his feet and started to cross the street, followed closely by Paul. Then he turned as suddenly back.

"Wait a minute," he said. "Perhaps you'd better give me the money. I want the bartender to see it when I go in. It'll be my ticket of admission, you know. He thinks I've got no money."

Paul thrust his hand into his trousers pocket, as he had done many times since midnight to assure himself of the safety of his stolen riches. The bank-notes were still there. He tried to detach one of them from the rest, so that he should not disclose his

entire wealth, but they did not yield readily to separation. Bolton grew impatient.

"Let me see it," he said. "How much have you?"

"I'd rather not tell," replied Paul frankly.

"Why not? Can't you trust me?"

"Oh, yes. But there are reasons why I'd rather you did n't know."

He was still struggling with the unaccommodating bills in his pocket. Richard Bolton began to reason the situation out in his mind. Where would a drunkard's child, a pauper, a bound apprentice, a runaway servant, get money enough to take them both to New York, and employ the services of a skilled scientist for one of them?

"Paul," he said at last, looking straight into the boy's eyes, "did you find the money?"

"No, father."

"Did you steal it?"

"Yes, I stole it."

"Whose money is it?"

"Lyman Gifford's."

"How much?"

"I have n't counted it. Five hundred dollars, I guess."

Richard Bolton staggered back to the platform and sat down on the edge of it. Paul followed him in deep distress.

"I could n't help it, father," he pleaded. "I could n't help it. I had the chance. I needed it. And he treated me worse than he treated his dog. I shall keep it, too," he added defiantly. "I shall keep it and use it."

"Yes, you shall — keep it — and use it," repeated the man slowly. "Let me see. Yes, we shall go to New York. You shall have treatment. Yes, surely. And we'll pay Lyman Gifford back some day. We'll be honest and pay him back. But we'll use his money. Let me see it."

As Paul drew from his pocket the entire roll of bills, the man reached for it hungrily.

"Let me count it," he said.

He took the money as a starving man would take food. He looked about him to see if any one was in sight, and then he turned the notes in his fingers carefully, one by one.

"Five hundred," he said when he had finished. "A king's ransom, my boy. It will free us both."

Then, for a moment, he sat as if lost in thought.

"Paul," he said finally. "Don't you think I had better carry this money? Some one might steal it from you. If it were found on you, it would be convincing evidence that you had stolen it. If any one knew you had it, it would at least arouse suspicion. Don't you think I'd better keep it for you?"

"Perhaps you had," replied Paul, a little doubtfully. "Maybe you could carry it safer than I could."

"Of course I can. See! I'll hide it this way."

Bolton produced a worn and empty leather wallet, laid the money carefully into it, and thrust the wallet deep into an inner pocket of his vest. Then he gave a little laugh and took it out again. "Oh," he said, "that's foolish! We must keep out enough to pay expenses." So he detached a note or two and was about to replace the remainder when another thought came to him.

"You, too," he said to Paul, "should have enough in hand to meet an emergency. You know we might get — accidentally — separated for a time."

He removed a five-dollar note and handed it to Paul. "That would tide you over," he said.

After a moment's pause, he added: —

"Here, take another one. You might possibly need it and I'm glad to give it to you."

When he had given Paul the money he again deposited the wallet, with its riches, in the inner pocket of his vest. Then the eager, hungry look which Paul had noticed once before came back into his eyes.

"Come!" he exclaimed, "there's no time to lose."

He hurried, almost ran, across the street, followed by the boy. When they entered the barroom of the hotel a short, thick-set, red-faced man, standing behind the bar and arranging bottles on a shelf, looked up at them.

"I thought I told you to keep out," he said gruffly to Bolton.

"So you did," replied Dick. "But that was last night and I had no money. Now it's this morning and I'm in funds. Look at this!"

He held up a five-dollar bill as he spoke. The bartender's countenance relaxed.

"That puts a different face on it," he said. "What do you want?"

"We want breakfast, quick, before the six-forty train comes in. And I want — Paul, you go into the dining-room. It's just across the hall there. I'll be in presently."

Paul did as he was bid, and a sleepy-faced girl came and waited on him. Pretty soon his father came in and sat down by him, and he knew, from his experiences of other days, that the man had been drinking. It had been with some misgiving that he had turned the money over to his father. It was with real fear now that he contemplated what he had done.

"Father," he said, "I wish you would n't drink any to-day. You know what it does to you."

"Yes, I know, Paul. But I was chilled to the bone. I had to have something warm. I should have died without it."

He swallowed a mouthful of food and a little coffee, and then he rose quickly from the table.

"Excuse me, Paul!" he said. "There's a matter I must attend to before the train leaves." And without another word he hurried from the room.

When Paul finished his unsatisfactory meal and went back into the barroom, he found his father leaning against the bar with a half-filled glass in his hand. It was plain that he was already under the influence of what he had taken. He greeted his son effusively and bade him come to the bar. He said: —

"I wan' t' introduce you to my frien' Bill — Bill — I beg par'n, Bill. Wha's your other name? It 'scapes my mem'ry."

"Never mind," responded Bill pleasantly; "it don't matter."

"No, of course not. Paul, my boy, how much time we got?"

Paul glanced at the clock hanging on the wall of the barroom. It still lacked twenty minutes of train time, and he said so.

"All right, my son. I've paid for breakfast. You run over to the depot an' I'll come presently. 'S' all right, Bill? eh?"

He gave the bartender a maudlin wink

and waved his hand toward the outside door. But Paul did not go at once.

"I wish you would come with me, father," he said. "You know," — he raised himself on tiptoe and whispered into his father's ear, — "you know you have the money."

"That's right, my boy. I forgot. I'll go with you."

He drained his glass, put his arm affectionately about Paul's shoulders, and started with him to the door. But at the threshold he stopped.

"Great note!" he exclaimed. "I mos' forgot to say Goo'-bye to the lan'lord. You go on. I'll be over in jus' one minute by that clock."

He pointed, with unsteady finger, to the clock on the wall, pushed the boy gently out through the doorway, and turned back into the barroom.

Poor Paul! He hardly knew what to do. He could scarcely have dreamed of anything more perplexing and disappointing than this. The exhilaration that glowed within him as through the night he walked the road from the Gifford farm to Mooresville was all

gone now. His heart lay like a clod in his breast. He waited a moment outside the door to try to collect his thoughts. He knew that Richard Bolton, when drunk, was good-naturedly, even courteously, obstinate. He felt that it would be useless to go back into the room and try to get him to come against his will. So he crossed the street to the railroad station, glancing up toward the town as he went to see if perchance his master or the officers of the law were on his track. A vision of the penitentiary from which his father had so recently emerged thrust itself before the eyes of his imagination. He did not go into the waiting-room where people would see him, but crouched, shivering, behind the corner of the freight shed, seeing all that he had hoped to accomplish by his crime swept already out of his reach, the victim of a drunken father, and the victim also now of his unrestrained and unreasoning fear.

He stood where he could see the door of the barroom, but no one came out. Indeed, he was at a loss to know whether he most desired his father to come or to stay. Then,

after many minutes, he heard from the distance the whistle of the approaching train. Under a desperate impulse he ran across the open space to the hotel and burst into the barroom.

"Father!" he cried, "the train's coming. Hurry up!"

But Richard Bolton, deep in his cups, sat limply in a barroom chair, his chin resting on his breast, oblivious of time or place.

"Father!" He took hold of the drunken man's shoulders and shook him roughly. "Father, wake up!"

The man, thus set upon, roused himself, lifted his head and opened his eyes.

"Paul," he murmured thickly, "time's up — run!"

Then his chin dropped again to his breast and he was silent. For a fraction of a minute Paul stood in fearful doubt and despair. Then an idea flashed into his mind. The bartender was not there. No one was in sight. If perchance he should rob a drunken man he would not be seen. He thrust his hand into the inner pocket of his father's vest where he had seen him place

the wallet with the money in it. The pocket was empty. Already the train had stopped at the station. The engine was throbbing impatiently to be off. The conductor's cry of "All aboard!" rang sharply out. Paul heard it. With a groan of despair he darted across the room and out of the door, covered the open space with flying leaps, grasped the railing at the end of the last car, and drew himself to the platform as the train drew slowly out. The tavern where his father was sitting in a drunken stupor receded and was lost in the distance; the town of Mooresville faded out of his sight, and Paul Bolton was on the threshold of a new career.

CHAPTER VI

WHEN Melissa came into the kitchen on the morning of Paul's departure and found no fire in the kitchen stove, she was not greatly surprised. She remembered the incident of the preceding evening, and concluded that, grieved and exhausted, the boy had fallen asleep late, and had not yet awakened, and, in her kindness of heart, she decided to let him sleep. When the hired man came down she charged him with having left the kitchen door unbolted, a charge which he stoutly denied. Another thing also puzzled her. The spout to the sink was disconnected, and the wire which had held it in place was gone. This she discovered to her discomfiture when the first water that she poured into the sink ran down to the kitchen floor. But she finally concluded that all of these mishaps were due in some way to the excitement of the night before.

It was not until Lyman Gifford came in to his breakfast at seven o'clock that any

definite inquiry was made concerning Paul. When the master of the house learned that his apprentice had not yet arisen, his anger flamed up anew. He rose from the table, flung open the door leading to the attic, and, declaring that no sluggard could hug the bed in his house, he mounted the steep staircase. When he returned, a minute or two later, there was a look of astonishment and perplexity on his face.

"He's not there," he said. He turned sharply on Melissa: "Have you seen or heard anything at all of him?"

"Take my dyin' oath," she replied. "I ain't heard a thing of 'im; I ain't seen hide nor hair of 'im since he went to bed las' night."

"Well, he has n't been to bed at all. His old clothes are strewn on the floor and his Sunday suit is missing. I'll warrant the little rascal has started to run away. Oh, well! he won't get far without any money. And when he comes back he'll wish he had n't gone. I'll promise him that."

"You ought to give him a good whipping, Lyman," said Mrs. Gifford. "That boy'll be

the death of me yet. I have n't got over the shock he gave me last night, setting the smokehouse on fire."

"He might as well have set it on fire," added her husband; "it amounts to the same thing."

He was in no gentle mood as he sat down to finish his breakfast. He thought to start out a little later and see if he could find any trace of the fugitive. He was satisfied that the boy could not have gone far. It even occurred to him that Hamilton Polley might be harboring the runaway. He would find out about it. But while he was eating there crept into his mind a dim apprehension of some greater disaster than a burned-up smokehouse or a runaway apprentice. Suddenly it occurred to him that it might be worth his while to go and look at the money he had received for the back farm the night before, and assure himself that it was safe. So, before finishing his meal, he rose and hurried into the sitting-room. He tried the lid of the bureau, and, greatly to his relief, he found it still locked. In order to be perfectly sure about the matter, however, he

took out his key, unlocked the lid and dropped it, and opened the drawer in which he had placed the money. The drawer was empty. His face turned white and then red. His lips moved with inarticulate sounds. It was a minute before he could find his voice to speak. Then he strode back into the kitchen.

“The brat has robbed me!” he cried. “He has stolen five hundred dollars of my money. Melissa, hunt for him! James! Where’s James? Tell James to hitch Nancy to the light buggy, quick!”

Mrs. Gifford, hearing the commotion, rushed into the room from the pantry.

“Lyman!” she cried, “what is it?”

“The young scoundrel has robbed me,” he repeated. “He has robbed me and run away. Search the house! Search the house!”

But she made no attempt to search the house. She dropped into a chair with her hand on her heart, whispering loudly: —

“What did I tell you, Lyman? I warned you! But you would take him in. Now see what you get for your pains!”

With an exclamation of impatience and anger Mr. Gifford hurried to the door to give new orders to James, and then he himself returned and began to make search of the house. He might as well have hunted in his pockets so far as finding any trace of the missing boy was concerned.

But the horse and buggy were soon ready, and, leaving directions with James to search the place and rouse the neighborhood, he jumped in and started, with the horse on a gallop, to go to the office of the nearest justice of the peace to procure a warrant for Paul's arrest.

Armed with the warrant and accompanied by a constable, he went straight to Hamilton Polley's modest home in the outskirts of the village. The stage-driver was in the yard hitching up his team and making ready to start on his daily trip to Mooresville.

"Have you seen anything of Paul Bolton since yesterday?" inquired Mr. Gifford.

"No, I ain't seen 'im," was the reply. "Why? Ain't run away, hes he?"

"He has run away. Do you know anything about it?"

The stage-driver laughed. "Well, now," he said, "mebbe I do an' mebbe I don't. Ef I don't, what I know won't hurt ye any. And ef I do, ye won't never git it out o' me by questionin'. Run away, hes he?" And again the driver laughed long and heartily.

"Look here, Hamilton!" exclaimed Mr. Gifford angrily; "this is no laughing matter. The boy has robbed me. He has stolen five hundred dollars out of my bureau drawer."

Hamilton Polley checked his laughter with a gulp and looked startled and incredulous.

"Stole yer money, Lyme?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes, stole my money," asserted the man, with emphasis. "And what I want to know is, what do you know about it?"

The stage-driver did not reply at once and the question was repeated.

"I say, what do you know about it?"

"Well, Lyme," came the drawling reply; "in the fust place, the boy ain't stole yer money. I know 'im too well fer that. He ain't got a dishonest hair in 'is white head. In the nex' place, ef he hes stole yer money,

what ye mean by askin' me what I know about it fer? S'pose I helped 'im steal it?"

"I suppose you're the most likely one to know anything about his rascality," was the quick reply. "You've coddled him and coached him and backed him in all his mischief and impudence, and I should n't be at all surprised if you had induced him to run away."

"You're right, Lyme. You an' me is responsible fer his runnin' away, ef he's gone. I put 'im up to it, and you druv 'im to it. But when you insinuate that I know anythin' about any money bein' stole, you're barkin' up the wrong tree, Lyme Gifford, and I'll tell ye that right now."

"Very well; then let's get down to business. I want to know, in the first place, where the boy has gone."

"All right! I'm ready fer business, too, an' my answer is, ef I knowed where he'd gone, I would n't tell ye. So there ye be."

Lyman Gifford turned away in disgust. This was simply wasting time. Polley's reputation for frankness and honesty was too well established to doubt that he meant what

he said, and that he was telling the truth when he declared that he had not seen Paul since the day before. So with a parting exclamation of anger, Mr. Gifford jumped into his buggy and drove away. But the stage-driver stood for many minutes looking down the road in the direction of the disappearing wagon, and wondering, with ever-increasing apprehension, what had really become of his young friend and favorite, and whether, by any possibility, Paul's master could be right in charging him with having committed a crime.

It was half-past eight o'clock before Mr. Gifford got back home, accompanied by the constable. Diligent inquiry at the village, along the road, and in the vicinity of the Gifford farm had failed to disclose any trace of the missing boy. But news of the theft and disappearance had spread, many were on the lookout for the fugitive, and some one was sent out in each direction to make search and inquiry.

Lyman Gifford himself, accompanied by the constable, drove straight toward Mooresville. It seemed to the officer that the most

likely thing for Paul to do would be to go to the county town and either begin to spend his stolen money there or board the morning train in order to elude pursuit. They made several inquiries along the way, without result, and having reached Mooresville, they drove directly to the railroad station. There the ticket agent told them that no one answering the description they gave of Paul had purchased a ticket that morning. Indeed, that no boy of any description had purchased a ticket to any point. Neither had the agent nor the baggage master seen a boy get on the train. Then a bystander, who had been listening to the conversation, wanted to know if it was Dick Bolton's boy about whom they were inquiring. And having been told that it was, he ventured the information that Dick himself, released from the penitentiary, had drifted into town the day before; that as a matter of fact he was at that moment in the Depot Hotel across the way; and he might possibly be able to tell them something about the boy — provided he was in a condition to talk intelligently. So Lyman Gifford and the constable

went over to the Depot Hotel. It was true that Dick Bolton was there. He was still sitting in a barroom chair, lost in a drunken stupor. The constable shook him by the shoulder and roused him, but, in answer to questions, he made only unintelligible replies.

"What is it you gents want to know?" inquired the bartender. "Maybe I can tell you."

"We want to know," said Mr. Gifford, "whether he has seen anything of his son to-day."

"Well," was the reply, "if the white-haired lamb that come in with him this morning was his son, I can tell you that he's seen 'im."

"Oh! then he's been here. Where did he go?"

The bartender shrugged his shoulders. "You've got me there," he said; "I ain't seen 'im since seven o'clock, at least."

"But I must find him. He's my runaway apprentice."

The bartender turned back to his work. "I can't help you none," he said, and added:

"I should think you'd be glad he run away, with that mug on 'im."

"Did he have any money here?"

"I don't remember seein' 'im have any," came the somewhat indifferent reply.

"Think, man, think! He stole five hundred dollars from me this morning, and I've got to find him!"

A tray slipped from the bartender's hand and went clattering to the floor.

"Stole — five hundred dollars — from you?" he repeated, facing his visitor in questioning amazement.

"Yes, stole five hundred dollars from me," with emphasis.

"Who stole it? the boy or the old man?"

"The boy."

"How do you know Dick did n't steal it?"

"Because he was n't at my place."

"Your money, was it?"

"Yes, yes, of course it was my money! If you know anything about it, out with it! Don't be all day!"

"Now, don't get excited. Just set down here till I go out and find the boss. Maybe he can do something for you. I don't know."

It was at least fifteen minutes later when the bartender returned with the proprietor of the hotel, to find the constable seated and calmly smoking a cigar while Mr. Gifford was pacing up and down the floor in nervous excitement and impatience.

"You see, it was this way," explained the proprietor affably. "Bill tells me that Dick and the boy came in early this morning and had breakfast. Dick had a couple of drinks and paid the bills and the boy went away. Then Dick had another drink, and it seemed to go to his head. Being without so long, I suppose. So Bill would n't give him anything more. And being what you might call crazy drunk, he got considerably upset about it, and pulled a wallet out of his pocket with a bunch of money in it and offered to buy out the whole shebang, so he could have a drink when he wanted it. Well, Bill is wise that way, and he pretended to sell the place to him and took his money for safe-keeping, and gave him another drink and he went to sleep. And he's been asleep off and on ever since."

"That's my money!" exclaimed Lyman Gifford.

“Well, it may be,” said the landlord cautiously; “but we have to be careful about such things, and, taking it from somebody else that way, we could n’t very well turn it over to you without some authority. It may be that the boy stole it, or Dick, more likely. He’s given to that sort of thing. You lost five hundred dollars?”

“Yes, five hundred dollars, and it’s my money. How much did you take from him?”

“Well, it lacked only about fifteen dollars of being five hundred. Now, as I say, Mr. Gifford, we have to be careful in these things, and I’ve thought the matter over and I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll turn the money over to the district attorney, and you can swear out a warrant for Dick’s arrest, and if it turns out that he stole the money or got it from the boy, they’ll give it back to you. But you see I could n’t turn the money over to you myself, Mr. Gifford, because we have to be very careful about these things, — very careful.”

There was some more discussion on the matter; but the landlord, though courteous, was firm, and finding that he could recover

his money in no quicker or easier way, Mr. Gifford accepted the terms. So a warrant was sworn out for Dick Bolton's arrest and he was carted off to the lock-up. The next day, having become partially sober, he was brought before the justice in pursuance of the warrant. But he waived a hearing and was committed to the county jail to await the next term of court. Nor would he talk. He would neither admit nor deny the charge against him. He would give no explanation whatever of how the money came to be in his possession; he would give not the slightest information concerning his son or his son's present whereabouts. To all questions he had but one reply: "I have nothing to say."

Lyman Gifford had no trouble in identifying his money. He had counted the bank-bills received from the purchaser of the back farm with such care, and had examined them with such caution, that he was able practically to describe them to the district attorney before seeing them. But fifteen dollars were missing, and this loss, following so closely upon the destruction of his smoke-house, Mr. Gifford regarded as no less than

a calamity. For no hurt could give greater pain to Lyman Gifford than a hurt to his pocketbook. And no means within the law were too remote, too trifling, or too troublesome for him to adopt, by which he might add another penny to his well-filled purse.

As for Paul, no further search was made for him. It did not appear to be worth while, nor worth the money that would have to be spent, to look him up, apprehend him, and bring him back. In view of his conduct while he was with them, both his master and his mistress considered that they were well rid of him. And in view of the uncertainty as to whether he had anything to do with the crime, the county authorities did not deem it wise to hunt him down at the expense of the public. So long as he remained away they would be satisfied.

At the December sessions Richard Bolton was brought to the bar on an indictment charging him with burglary, larceny, and receiving stolen goods. When asked if he had counsel he replied that he had not and had no money to employ an attorney, but that he did not consider it necessary for the

court to assign any one to defend him. He then announced that he would plead guilty to the charges of larceny and receiving, but that he was not guilty of the charge of burglary. He was well aware that the district attorney had no evidence with which to convict him of the major charge, and the district attorney himself, appreciating that fact, was quite willing that the charge of burglary should be dismissed and that his plea on the other two counts should be accepted.

Three days later he was called to the bar to receive his sentence.

“Richard Bolton,” said the court, “you have entered a plea of guilty to the charges of larceny and receiving stolen goods, and the more serious charge against you, that of burglary, has been dismissed. We are not quite satisfied with this disposition of the case. From what we have learned of the facts it appears that others besides yourself were involved in the commission of this crime. We call upon you now, before passing sentence on you, to divulge to the court the name and identity of any other person who participated with you in this offense against

the law, and we also demand that you reveal the circumstances under which the crime was committed. And we may say to you that a full and frank confession from you at this time will doubtless result in a very considerable modification of the sentence which we are otherwise prepared to pass on you."

"Your Honor," replied Richard Bolton, "I have no confession to make. I have entered a plea of guilty to the charges standing against me; I am ready to accept in full the consequences of that plea."

"The court is not satisfied," replied the judge sternly, "to let the matter rest so. You have a son known as Paul Bolton?"

"I have, Your Honor."

"Where is your son at the present time?"

"I do not know."

"What part, if any, did your son take in the commission of this crime for which you are about to be sentenced?"

"Your Honor, I alone am responsible for the crime that has been committed. If any suspicion or blame or charge of wrongdoing appears to lie at the door of my son, it should be shifted at once to mine. I alone am

guilty, and I am guilty in a way and by means which Your Honor could not understand, though I were to spend an hour in explanation. I have nothing more to say. I am ready for the sentence."

After that the court had no mercy on him. The sentence imposed was to the full extent of the law. It was his second state's prison offense, and he must be taught now that the laws of the land were made to be obeyed.

So, a few days later, he started in to serve another term in the penitentiary from which he had been so recently released. And the community in which the father had been so unfavorably known, and to which the son had been an unwilling burden, proclaimed good riddance to both of them and went on in its accustomed way.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN Paul Bolton, breathless and excited, swung himself to the rear platform of the last car in the train and saw Mooresville disappear from his sight, he knew that he was making his entry into a new world. He entered the car and found a vacant seat. It was his first ride on a railroad train, and, under ordinary circumstances, he would have looked about him with wonder and deep interest. But the experiences through which he had recently passed were too fresh and harrowing to be easily put out of his mind. He hid himself as much as possible in a corner of the seat by the window, and appreciated only vaguely the wonders of travel.

A brakeman who had seen Paul's flying leap came up to him and said: —

“Don't try that trick again, young fellow. Some day you'll get slung, jumping on cars that way, and have your brains smashed out.”

“I had to catch this train,” replied Paul

weakly, "and I could n't do it without running and jumping."

"Well, you'll run and jump once too often. Now, mind what I tell you."

And the brakeman passed on.

When the conductor came and asked him for his ticket, Paul told him he had n't any ticket, but he had some money and would pay his fare with that.

"Where are you going?" asked the conductor.

"To New York," replied the boy promptly.

"Well, I'll take your fare to Scranton. You have to change cars there, and you can get a ticket from there to New York."

He took one of Paul's five-dollar notes, handed him back the change and a train slip, and then he, too, went on his way.

There was no one in the car whom Paul knew, and apparently no one who knew him. He was thankful for that. And yet, whenever any one in the car, attracted by his hair and eyes and complexion, looked closely at him, the boy felt that such a one must somehow have divined that he was a runaway apprentice and a thief, and he felt also that

he was in imminent danger of being denounced and given up to the authorities at the next station. But station after station was passed. People left the car and others came into it and nothing happened. When the train reached Scranton, Paul found his way to the ticket office, purchased his ticket to New York, and, after a wait of half an hour, boarded the through train. There was not so much room here as there had been on the branch train, and the boy could not have a seat to himself. But as he wandered uncertainly down the aisle, an old gentleman with a kindly face, wearing large spectacles set low on his nose, moved over against the window and beckoned to Paul to sit with him. At Nay Aug the train passed through a tunnel. The sudden and continued darkness startled the boy, who was already laboring under a severe nervous strain, and in his fear and excitement he grasped the old man's arm. When they emerged into the brightness of daylight, and Paul could open his weak eyes a little to the light, he discovered that the old gentleman was looking down at him with a kindly smile.

"Ain't much used to travelin' on the railroad, I guess," said the old man.

"No," replied the boy; "I never rode on the cars before to-day, and it — it kind o' scared me. Was it a tunnel?"

"Yes, that was a tunnel. Great railroad this is. Going far?"

"Yes, to New York."

"That's a good ways. Ever been there?"

"No, sir. This'll be the first time."

"Well, it's a big city. I go there sometimes myself."

After a few remarks concerning the train and the country through which they were passing, the two travelers lapsed into silence. Paul did not wish to talk, lest he should unwittingly be led into disclosures concerning himself. His fellow passenger apparently respected the boy's mood and did not ply him with questions. The engine puffed and labored up the slope of the Pocono Mountain, and after the train had reached the summit Paul's companion called his attention to the great expanse of country lying open to their gaze, and to the sharp, square opening in the hill range in the farthest distance.

"That," said the old man, "is the Delaware Water Gap. That's where the river breaks through the mountain. We'll go through there by and by."

This bit of information broke the ice again and there was more conversation, consisting largely of questions on the boy's part and answers and explanations on the part of his companion. It was after they had reached and passed the Water Gap that the old gentleman, unable longer to restrain his natural curiosity, asked Paul if he expected any one to meet him in New York.

"No," was the reply. "I think I'll get along all right alone."

"I did n't know but you might be goin' to Barnum's. I knew a white-haired boy like you, not long ago, and he went to Barnum's. He got a good job there."

"Doing what?" asked Paul, with deep interest.

"Oh, just posin' as a freak. I believe Barnum advertised him as having been captured in the South Sea Islands. All he had to do was to stand around and look scared, and he got good pay for it."

"You mean in Barnum's show?"

"Yes, in the show."

Paul looked into the old man's face sharply to discover, if possible, whether he was being made the butt of a joke. But his companion was serious enough.

"I would n't want a job like that," the boy said finally.

"You would n't? Why not?"

"Because then I'd have to keep my hair white and my eyes red, and what I want to do is to change 'em."

"Change 'em, eh? How you goin' to do that?"

"I think a chemist could do it. Do you know any chemists in New York?"

"No, I don't. Maybe a chemist could do it. Do your parents know you're going to change 'em?"

"My mother's dead, and my father—well, he's willing."

"Does he know you are goin' to New York?"

"Yes, sir, I think he does."

It was the old man's turn to regard Paul now with close scrutiny. Here was a

peculiar situation. He felt that he must know more about this unusual boy.

"Let me see," he said, "you got on at Scranton. Live there, do you?"

"No, sir."

"Oh, came in on the branch train. From how far up?"

But Paul was getting wary. He did not know how far he would dare to go in giving information to his fellow passenger. Now that he was well on the way toward freedom he did not care to take any risks.

"Oh, not far," he replied.

"Wonder if you know anybody livin' up around Mooresville. I used to buy cattle up in that country. I've got a boy up there now. He's just bought a farm back of Redstone. Ever hear of Redstone?"

Paul felt his face flush and his breath come in short gasps.

"Ye — yes," he replied faintly. "I — I've heard of it."

The man looked at him curiously.

"Maybe you know Lyman Gifford up there," he said. "He's the man William's

been buying of. Was to have paid him part down yesterday."

It seemed to the boy that the eyes of his inquisitor pierced through him and read his inmost thought. Already, so far away from the scene of his crime, his sin had found him out. He did not know what to say. He stammered, choked, and was silent. He felt that the story of his guilt was written in plain letters all over his face, in every motion of his body. The train had slowed up and come to a stop, and people were leaving the car. Then the old man, who had been so absorbed in Paul's strange conduct that he had not noticed the stopping of the train, looked suddenly out of the window.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed, jumping to his feet. "Here's Stroudsburg. I get off here. Good-bye, my son! I hope you reach New York all right."

He pushed his way into the aisle, hurried down to the door of the car, and disappeared. But Paul did not draw a long breath until the train was again well under way and until the town of Stroudsburg and his fellow passenger were left far behind. After that he

was in no frame of mind to pay much heed to what was going on in the car or to enjoy the beautiful scenery from the car window.

The train thundered and rattled on through the New Jersey highlands, stopping at many towns along the way; but the unhappy boy found little pleasure in the journey. Instead of looking forward and planning what he should do on his arrival in the city, he could think only of what he had done. And as he thought, the memory of his crime grew more and more distasteful to him, more and more humiliating, more and more hateful to his inborn sense of manliness. Every curious eye that was fixed on him, and there were many such eyes, seemed to convict him of degradation. The very car in which he rode, as it went clanking, now fast, now slow, over the joints of the rails, seemed to repeat in his ears with ever-increasing emphasis the startling and truthful accusation: "You are a thief! You are a thief!"

When the train pulled into Hoboken, it was with a great sigh of relief that he heard the announcement that the end of the railroad journey had been reached. From in-

quiries that he had made of the old gentleman on the train Paul understood that New York City lay on the other side of the Hudson River from the railroad terminal, and that it would be necessary for him to cross in a ferryboat. So he followed the other passengers to the boat and shortly found himself moving down the great expanse of water that forms a harbor to the city. For the moment he forgot his troubles in looking on the sights that surrounded him. Standing on the forward deck of the boat, the whole wonderful panorama lay open to his blinking eyes. River craft were moving up and down, sails were glinting in the sunlight, tugs were puffing laboriously along, dragging after them their heavy tows, here and there a big river or coast steamer ploughed the waves majestically, other ferryboats, with passenger-laden decks, churned the water into foam and, on the farther shore, a forest of big buildings rose, tier after tier, to form a jagged sky-line. It was all very new and very marvelous, and the wonder of it was still fresh when the boat pulled into her dock at the foot of Barclay Street.

Paul passed with the crowd up the wharf to the plaza in front of the ferry-house. At last he stood face to face with the city of his dreams. It was here that he was to find release from his burdens. But how should he set about procuring it? He had worked out no plan. He was entirely at a loss to know what to do next. Moreover, he was bewildered by the tumult and confusion of the place. Wagons and great drays were rumbling over the pavement. Hackmen were soliciting prospective passengers with insistent calls. Street-cars drawn by horses with tinkling bells were moving up and down. Multitudes of people were hurrying here and there on what multiplicity of errands the wisest man that ever lived could not have told. To one who had never heard it or seen it before the confusion of noises and of moving objects was appalling. No wonder the boy was bewildered. As he had been on the train, so here, he was being constantly stared at by the curious. A street boy discovered his white hair and pink eyes and called to another to come and look. Then came still others. In scarcely more than a minute a

curious, pushing crowd had collected around him. He felt that this would never do, that he must go somewhere, anywhere to escape the mob. So he broke through the human wall that surrounded him and plunged ahead into the middle of the street. He dodged under the noses of a huge pair of dray-horses clattering heavily along the pavement, missed by a hair's breadth being struck by the corner of a moving street-car, and then, suddenly, in the midst of the tangle of traffic, he was run down by a pair of prancing black horses with arched necks, the silver-plating on their harness flashing in the sunlight. They were being driven by a coachman in livery, and they were drawing an open carriage in which was seated a woman, riding alone, wrapped round with furs, and reclining with conscious ease and grace against the cushions at her back. Prone in the dust the boy lay, spurned by the hoofs of the horses. A front wheel of the carriage mounted his breast and rolled back as the coachman brought his team to a sudden stop. The woman half-rose.

“Oh, Patrick!” she cried. “What have you done?”

"It was n't my fault, ma'am," the coachman replied. "Sure he ran straight into us."

But he was down from his box in an instant and helped drag the unfortunate boy from his perilous position. That Paul was seriously injured was at once apparent. Blood was flowing from a wound on his head, his right arm hung limp, his face was pallid, and his breathing was forced and painful. A policeman bustled up, pushed the crowd aside, and began to ask questions. Some one suggested that the boy should be carried to a neighboring store and an ambulance sent for.

"No," said the woman in the carriage, "I'll take him to the hospital myself. Put him in here with me. Poor boy!" she added, as Paul was lifted up, half-conscious, to her side; "poor boy!"

The policeman mounted the box with the coachman, the crowd parted, and the hurt boy was driven rapidly to the New York Hospital which then stood at Broadway and Duane streets. There, after a careful examination of his injuries, it was said that he was suffering from a broken arm, two fractured

ribs, and a severe laceration of the scalp. It was bad enough, indeed: but it might well have been much worse. A hurried investigation of the circumstances surrounding the accident had indicated clearly enough that the coachman was not to blame, and neither he nor his mistress was detained. The woman remained long enough, nevertheless, to receive the report of the examining surgeon, and to direct that every possible care and attention should be given to the boy at her expense. Her sympathy had been aroused by the unfortunate accident, and her curiosity by the lad's strange appearance. So she came next day to see him. She found him lying on his cot, very pale, his head swathed in bandages, and one arm lying rigid and motionless under the coverlets. The fractured bones had been set, the wounds carefully dressed, and there was every prospect of his speedy recovery. But he could not speak without difficulty, nor could he breathe without suffering much pain in the region of the fractured ribs. His visitor took his rough hand for a moment, and patted it gently and said, "Poor boy!

Poor boy!" as she did when he was lifted into the carriage beside her; and then she went away. It was not until the third day after the accident that Paul was able to talk freely and to give some information concerning himself to the woman whose horses had run him down. She was sitting beside his bed holding his hand. In the darkened room he could open his eyes wide and look at her. He thought he had never before seen so beautiful a lady. She learned from him briefly that his name was Paul Bolton, that his mother was dead, that he was, in some unexplained way, separated from his father, and that he had come alone to the city to seek his fortune. Beyond that he was strangely and persistently reticent.

"Tell me this, Paul," she said. "Have you any friends in the city?"

"None — except you," he replied.

She laughed a little at that. "It was not a very friendly thing we did to you," she declared; "but I shall surely be your friend hereafter. My name is Mrs. Willard, and my husband, Victor Willard, is the kindest man in the world. Have you any money, Paul?"

"I had two or three dollars in my pocket. Maybe it's lost now. I forgot about it."

"Well, we'll see if we can find it. At any rate, you shall not want for money enough to last you till you get entirely well."

"You don't have to do that for me," replied the boy frankly. "It was n't your driver's fault. I got bewildered and ran into the horses."

She laughed again, merrily. "You're a strange lad," she said. "But you must have consideration for my pocketbook and hurry up and get well. Will you?"

Paul promised that he would do his best. And he did. For when she came, a few days later, she found him sitting up in bed with a look on his face of returning health. But he would not tell her much about himself, of the facts and incidents of his past life, of his former friends and acquaintances, or of his old home. Nor did she seek to draw from him unwilling disclosures. She felt that he had some good reason for wishing to keep these things hid from her, and that she had no right either to force or to tempt him into making any revelation of his past. She be-

lieved also that by nature he was ingenuous, and that whatever shadows might hang over his former life, they were not of his making and would eventually disappear.

When he was able to be up and move about his room at the hospital, she came one day and said to him: —

“Paul, how would you like to come and live at my house and be my footman?”

“I don’t know what a footman is,” replied Paul. “But I should like very well to go and live at your house and work for you at anything you have to do. I’ll have to get a job somewhere, you know.”

“Oh, you’ll make an ideal footman, and it won’t be hard work either.”

“I don’t mind hard work,” said the boy. “And it could n’t be any harder than the work I did before I came here.”

“Indeed! What kind of work was that?”

“Farm work.”

“I love a farm. What did you have to do?”

So he told her what his daily tasks had been on a farm to which he gave no name and for which he gave no location. And when

he had ended the recital she said again, as she had said often before, "Poor boy! Poor boy!"

But it was settled that when Paul was able to leave the hospital he would go to be Mrs. Willard's footman. And he did go. She came for him one afternoon with the same handsome black horses and open coach with which she had taken him to the hospital. She brought a heavy coat for him to wear, for winter was now come, and one must be well protected to ride comfortably through the New York streets. They stopped at the clothier's and at the hatter's and the shoe store and the hairdresser's. And by the time they reached the family home on Washington Square, Paul was, indeed, a well-dressed boy. He was assigned to a small but warm and clean room in the upper story of the house and to a seat at the servants' table. He was received with kindness by every one, and, in the course of a few days, yielding readily to instruction, he became proficient in his new duties. When he was fully clothed in his dark-green livery he was, indeed, a striking figure. Tall for his age,

straight and wiry, white-haired and pink-eyed, easy in movement and courteous in manner, he became an ideal hall-servant and footman. Mrs. Willard was proud of him, and not only proud but vain. No other mistress of a household in that exclusive and aristocratic neighborhood could boast of a servant in livery with natural white hair and pink eyes. Their servants, aping the colonial style, had either to be powdered or to wear wigs. Hers was a product of nature. Every time her street doorbell rang a thrill of pride went through her to know that it would be answered by a servant so attractive and distinguished in appearance, so bright in mind, so polite in manner.

As for Paul, he could have found no lighter task, he could have received no kinder or more generous treatment. Yet he was far from being happy. He felt that this was not the goal toward which his feet had turned, nor the life for which his heart had longed. He was only a menial, dependent on his master's generosity and his mistress's whim. He knew well enough that his value to them consisted, for the most part, in his abnormal

aspect, in that burden which had, from the beginning, weighed most heavily on his own soul. So he never, for one moment, laid aside his ambition to have that change made which would hide from the whole world the fact that he was an albino. No day of his life passed that he did not seek to formulate some plan by which that ambition could be satisfied.

But that was not the only thing that weighed heavily on his mind and heart. Oh, by no means! He never went to bed at night, he never arose in the morning, that he was not confronted with the memory of his drunken father sitting stupid in the barroom of the Depot Hotel. No hour of the day ever passed that he did not see himself as he stood that night, picking the lock of Lyman Gifford's desk, opening the private drawer, stealing his master's money, and slinking away with it through the darkness. Here in a better environment, under happier conditions, his conscience, dulled in the old days by hardship and disaster, had awakened to new life, and he saw himself as he was, a common thief. He knew that, sooner or

later, in one way or another, he must suffer the penalty for his crime. He knew also that the part of a man would be to go back to Redstone, acknowledge his guilt, and suffer whatever punishment might be meted out to him. Many times, indeed, his mind was more than half made up to go; but when he thought of that prison in which his father had been shut up, when he thought of serving out his apprenticeship with Lyman Gifford, and of working for him long enough beyond that period to repay what he had stolen, when he thought of all the scorn and the sneers and the utter contempt with which he would be greeted on his return, and of all the hardships and cruelties he would have to undergo, his courage failed him and he stayed. So, employed at light labor with good wages, surrounded by every comfort, treated with the utmost kindness and consideration, he nevertheless led a miserable life.

The winter went by. March, with its whirling dust clouds and its driving storms, came and passed. Then, suddenly, sweetly, beautifully, spring dropped down into Washington Square. Green grass, tender foliage,

blossoming flowers, singing birds, all the charming sights and sounds of waking nature lay open to the dwellers in these favored streets. But spring brought no beauty and exercised no charm sufficient to quiet the conscience or satisfy the heart of the boy who had sought, however vainly, to accomplish his purpose through crime and flight.

His mistress said to him one day: —

“Paul, you are unhappy. Why is it? We cannot help but notice it. Do we not treat you well? Is any one in the house unkind to you?”

“No,” he replied. “You are all very good to me, indeed. I could n’t ask for better treatment. I am unhappy because — well, I simply want to be different.”

“Different in what way?”

“Oh, in every way.”

“For instance?”

“Well, I don’t want to be ungrateful, Mrs. Willard. I’m not ungrateful, indeed, I’m not. But I’m your footman because my hair is white and my eyes are pink. And I want to have dark hair and dark eyes and a dark complexion, just like other boys. And then

I want a man's job. I can work, Mrs. Willard. I'd like to work if I only had a chance. But I'm an albino. I know. I'm an albino. And when I go out with working clothes on, I'm stared at and made fun of and called names. An albino has no chance, Mrs. Willard, no chance."

He was tremendously in earnest, and she saw it, and appreciated the desire that lay at the bottom of his passionate protest. Yet, for the moment, she tried to soothe him, and make him content with his lot.

"I know, Paul," she said. "I know. But why worry about that now? It'll be quite a while yet before you'll be old enough to do what you call a man's work. Why not make the best of the situation as it exists and let the future take care of itself when you reach it?"

"Because there's not time, Mrs. Willard. There's not time. There are some things that I have to do, and — and some debts I have to pay; and I must be getting ready to do them, and I must be earning the money to pay them, and I can do nothing, nothing with this white hair!"

She had not seen him in such deadly earnest, not since he had been with her.

"Poor boy!" she said. "Poor boy! What can we do for you? How can we help you?"

"I don't know, Mrs. Willard; I don't know. But if I could only go and work for a doctor or a chemist who would darken my hair for my wages, and fix my skin and eyes, I'd work at anything, I would n't care how hard, if I could only have it done!"

"I understand, Paul. I'll see. I'll talk with Mr. Willard about it. Perhaps we can help you. But I should be so sorry, oh, so sorry to lose my white-haired footman!"

She did talk with Mr. Willard about it. And as Mr. Willard never thwarted her in any wish, they decided that Paul should have his chance. She was warm-hearted and sympathetic, and she was willing to forego her own pleasure and to curb her own vanity, in order that the boy's craving might be satisfied. So the next day she called him to her and said: —

"You shall have your wish, Paul. I don't know what can be done. I have n't the least idea. But, at any rate, we will try. To-mor-

row we will visit Dr. Amend at the university. He is a renowned chemist. If any one can help you to accomplish a transformation such as you desire, he is the one."

So Paul Bolton went to bed that night with the star of hope sending rays of comfort into his heart. He felt that at last a way was to be opened through which he might reach American manhood, and on that firm basis he would have strength to stand and pay the penalty for his misdeeds.

CHAPTER VIII

IN the early sixties the medical department of New York University was located on Fourteenth Street, the present site of Tammany Hall. In his room adjoining the laboratory in this building Dr. Amend, the famous chemist, was seated when Mrs. Willard entered with Paul. She was no stranger to him, for he had not infrequently been called by her husband in consultation in matters relating to Mr. Willard's business as an iron founder. He had hardly finished his greeting to her when his eyes fell on Paul.

"Ach!" he cried, "the albino! the albino!"

He pushed his spectacles back on his forehead and took Paul's hand in his.

"Beautiful!" he exclaimed. "Beautiful! The type in perfection."

He ran his fingers through the boy's silky hair, looked into his eyes, pinched his cheeks, and scrutinized his finger-nails.

"I have not seen in my life a more perfect

specimen," he added, turning enthusiastically to Mrs. Willard.

"Yes," she replied; "but Paul does n't think it's beautiful. He wants it changed."

"Changed! You do not mean — he does not want the color in his hair, his face — to be just like ten thousand, hundred thousand other boys? Ach, no!"

"Yes, Doctor, if you please," said Paul. "I want to be just like a hundred thousand other boys, just like them."

"But, my boy; that is so bad! Now you have such fine look, such — such distinguishment. You cannot mean it!"

"It is the one desire of the boy's heart, Doctor," responded Mrs. Willard. "We have decided to yield to his wish and see what can be done. What do you think?"

The great chemist waved his hand with a deprecatory gesture.

"Oh, yes!" he replied. "Yes, if you wish. In a way it can be done. But" — running his fingers again through the boy's hair — "it is so bad to spoil such perfect type. Well, now, let us see. We cannot change his — what you call — make-up, so to give him

more coloring matter to be deposited by circulation. We can only make superficial treatment. But that will do, that will do. There must be repetition. Now, then," turning to Paul, "you like your hair black, brown, what?"

"Brown, if you please, sir."

"Very good! Brown. And your skin olive, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"So."

But the man of science was still reluctant to spoil the type. He stood for a moment in contemplation, then he made another deprecatory gesture.

"It is so bad," he said, "to change such beautiful hair, such beautiful complexion, into so common color. But — now, the eyes. We cannot change the color in the eye. Oh, yes, maybe, by surgery, by what you call — scarification, by injection. But," with a shrug of his shoulders, "that is bad. Do not permit it. The danger is extreme. So comes the ruined eye, blindness, yes. But now, with glasses. Let me see. Smoked glasses, blue, perhaps, fitting close, so. That

makes it. Then he has brown eyes like the hair, yes."

"Good!" exclaimed Mrs. Willard. "That will be just the thing, Doctor."

Her enthusiasm, now that she had set definitely about seeking the transformation, was scarcely equaled by that of Paul himself.

"Yes," continued the doctor, "he should wear glasses, anyway. Colored glasses. He should have been these many years wearing them. These albino eyes, they cannot bear the light. See how he — what you say? — squint?"

He took Paul by the shoulders and swung him around to face the window, and his eyes went blinking and closing as they always did when the light struck them.

"Oh, yes! I fix you, my boy. You come to me. To-morrow — no, not then. To-morrow I cannot. You come Thursday. Three o'clock. Then I fix you. I send you out not — What you call his name?" turning to Mrs. Willard.

"Paul," she replied promptly. "Paul Friend."

"Yes, I send you out, not any longer Paul

Friend, American, but Pasquale Domenico, Italian. So!"

And the big man laughed heartily as Paul, pleased beyond measure, said "Thank you!" and they went away.

Dr. Amend was as good as his word. When Paul came on Thursday the doctor was ready for him. The boy had already been to a well-known hairdresser, who had trimmed and washed his hair and had thoroughly cleansed his scalp with a solution prepared after Dr. Amend's own prescription. Now he was placed in a high chair, a basin containing a dark liquid was set on a stand near by, and an attendant, with sleeves rolled to his elbows, and armed with a fine, stiff-bristled brush, began the task of transformation. He dipped the brush in the liquid, shook it out, and drew it slowly through a lock of the boy's hair. This process he repeated, lock by lock, and then over again, till not a single hair of the head had been left untouched. The eyebrows were given the same treatment. In the mean time Dr. Amend stood looking on, giving directions and making comments.

“A little more on this side, Rupert. It will not do harm. I do not much believe in the mercuric solutions. Anyway, we have not advanced greatly beyond old Paulus Ægineta and his green-walnut juice. But in these days a little acetate of lead and sulphur do not come amiss. So; that is very good, Rupert.”

While the hair was drying, a box of ointment was produced, and with this the skin of the face and neck and hands was carefully and completely massaged, powdered, and rubbed dry. There was no mystery about the process, and no pain. It needed time and care, that was all. After this a specially constructed pair of spectacles, the frame of which had been already fitted by a celebrated oculist, were placed over Paul's eyes. They contained smoked glasses, shading into blue, and he was surprised and pleased to find how well he could see through them, and how wide open he could hold his eyes while looking at the light. Moreover, they were so constructed that one, looking at him from any angle, would not see his eyes, nor discover that they were the red eyes of an albino.



THAT IS VERY GOOD, RUPERT

When it was all over, Paul was bidden to look at himself in a glass. The transformation was complete. He was sure that his own father would not have known him, and that his mother, had she been living, would have failed utterly to recognize him. He himself, looking at his face in the mirror, could discover no resemblance to the boy whose image had confronted him scarcely two hours before.

"Well," questioned the doctor, "how you like him, eh?"

"Splendid!" replied Paul. "It's perfectly splendid! I don't believe any one who ever knew me would recognize me to-day."

And he was undoubtedly right. Before he went away, Dr. Amend gave to him, in writing, specific instructions for self-treatment, together with much verbal advice. He also gave to him a bottle containing the liquid, and a box containing the ointment to be used, with prescriptions for the renewing of each. Nor did he forget the brush, or even the powder.

"It is by repetition that you keep it perfect," he said finally. "Forget not that each

week the hair grows the one eighth inch from the scalp, and the one eighth inch comes always white."

Paul held his head high and walked with an air of self-confidence as he made his way through the crowd on Broadway and so back down Waverly Place to Washington Square. No one stared at him. No one noticed that he was in any way different from the hundreds of other young men and boys on the street. The relief of it was great. The joy of it was all that he had ever hoped it would be. He was no longer Paul Bolton the albino, an object to be gazed at by all the curious. He was no longer "Paul Pink-Eye," nor the "white nigger," nor the "red-eyed rabbit." He was just an ordinary young man, like thousands of other young men with brown hair, a dark complexion, and weak eyes shaded by tinted glasses. So he stood on the threshold of a new life, with one dream come true, one longing satisfied, and the future filled with a thousand possibilities.

That evening he went to Mrs. Willard, holding in his hand the little money that he had been able to save from his weekly wages,

and begged her to take it in part payment of Dr. Amend's forthcoming bill for services, for which she had made herself responsible. But she laughed and would not touch it.

"It is but a trifling matter," she said, "in comparison with the pleasure that the change has brought to you. I will make it a little parting gift. It will cost me a great deal more than that to get along, as I will have to now, without my white-haired footman."

For it had been plain to Mrs. Willard, from the moment Paul had expressed to her his desire for the transformation, that, the change being made, she could no longer retain him in her employ. But her deep interest in the boy would not permit her to lose him wholly from her sight. So at her request, and indeed in accordance with his own desire, her husband found a place for him in the manufacturing department of his foundry and machine shops located, at that time, at the foot of Eleventh Street. The work was hard and the hours were long, but it was what Paul called "a man's job," and, with his fondness for machinery and mechanics, it was one in which he soon became

intensely interested. Moreover, it was a place where he would have an opportunity to learn and to advance in accordance with the skill and merit he displayed. They were sorry to lose him from the Willard household, where his quick intelligence and his unfailing courtesy and patience had made him a favorite, not only with his master and mistress, but with his fellow employees as well. But it was necessary that he should go. He found quarters in a modest boarding-house near the factory; and there was a night school in the neighborhood which offered him advantages of which he gladly availed himself. So, as a boy of fifteen, but with the manner and method and habit of thought of a young man of twenty, he entered upon the first real and congenial task of his life. In jumper and overalls, grimy and oil-smeared, and streaked with perspiration, he went about his work with a joy, a zeal, and an understanding that seemed little less than marvelous. What might have been expected happened. At the age of sixteen he was advanced to a place among the expert workers. At seventeen he was given one of the most

intricate machines in the shop to operate and care for, and at eighteen he was placed in charge of one of the departments in the factory. Nor had there been the slightest suggestion of favoritism on the part of his employer. His promotion was in every case a reward of pure merit, and operated for the benefit of the concern as well as to his own advantage.

In the mean time the country had been shaken to its foundations by the mighty events of the Civil War. With intense eagerness this boy had studied the great questions of national policy. He had watched the swelling tides of patriotism in the North, and he had heard, with strained ears, the echoes of the thunder of battle. His admiration for the great, wise, patient statesman who sat in the presidential chair had developed into a feeling of the deepest reverence. And when, in '62, Abraham Lincoln issued his last call for volunteers, Paul felt that the time had now come for him to put his patriotic principles into practice.

He came one day into his employer's office.

"Mr. Willard," he said, "I was eighteen years old yesterday."

"Indeed!" responded the man, laying down his pen. "Let me congratulate you."

"And President Lincoln has issued a call for three hundred thousand more troops."

"Yes, I have read the call."

"And I think, Mr. Willard, that the time has come for me to go."

Victor Willard rose from his chair and grasped the boy's hand. "You are right," he said. "The time has come for you to go. I need you here, but your country's need is the greater."

"Thank you, sir! I will enlist at once."

"And when you return you will find your old place waiting for you."

"Sometimes soldiers do not return from war," said Paul solemnly.

"I know. I know. But the God of battles will protect you and bring you back to us. I believe it."

So it was settled that Paul should go to war. But first there were some things to be done which could not await the uncertainties of the camp or the events of battle. From the

night when he had stolen Lyman Gifford's money it had been Paul's unfailing purpose to pay it back. Nor had that purpose, as is too often the case, faded and died out with the years. On the contrary, it had grown and become more vigorous as he watched, week by week, the increase of his modest balance at the bank. The time had come, now, to put it into execution. On the morning of his departure for the South he bought a draft and sent it to Lyman Gifford, accompanied by the following note: —

“I am enclosing a draft to your order to repay you the amount stolen from you on the night of November 23d, 1859, by a boy named Paul Bolton; together with interest compounded at six per cent: and his expression of penitence for his crime.”

Not that the repayment of the money, even with compound interest, would wipe from his conscience the stain of guilt. He was too clear-headed and high-souled to delude himself with such a belief. Nor did it matter to him that he had lost the money almost as soon as he had taken it. His only

motive was to do an act of common and material justice to Lyman Gifford. That he would still, before the high court of conscience, if not before a court of law, have to make full reparation for his crime, he did not for a moment doubt.

So Paul went down to war. As a private he joined McClellan's great army in Virginia. As a sergeant he was with Burnside at Fredericksburg and along the Rappahannock, and with Meade in that supreme clash of arms at Gettysburg. And as a lieutenant of his company he fought with Grant through the Wilderness campaign. In the bloody whirl and tangle of contending armies at Cold Harbor, he caught a fleeting glimpse of his father, Richard Bolton, smoke-stained, bandaged, and bleeding, in the forefront of an assaulting column, fighting with the fierceness and *abandon* of one desperate in daring; but before he could greet him, or signal to him, a wall of blazing steel crashed in between them, and, after that, pierced with bullets, torn with bayonets, and trampled on by advancing and retreating hosts, sight and sense were lost to him, and

only the merest spark of life clung still to his hurt and bleeding body. But he did not die. Good habits and a vigorous constitution, and a strong determination to recover, proved to be so much of an aid to the skill of surgeons and the care of nurses that, before many weeks went by, he was declared to be on the road to complete recovery. But he never fought again. Before he left the hospital Petersburg had fallen, and he had hardly started North on an invalid's furlough when Grant entered Richmond, and the war was practically at an end. Then followed the tragic death of Abraham Lincoln. He died on the morning of the day that Paul returned to New York. Only once had the young soldier seen him, and that once was while he was lying in the hospital recovering from his wounds. Lincoln had been a visitor there one day and had stopped at Paul's bedside and had taken his hand and talked to him. Before that the young soldier had admired and revered him, but ever afterward he loved him. And he never thought of the homely, patient face that bent down over him that day, nor of the

heartfelt words that fell from the great man's lips, that the quick tears did not fill his eyes, that his heart did not beat faster with the memory. So it was with a deep sense of personal bereavement that Paul made his way up from the landing, through the crowded streets to Broadway.

He was still weak from his long illness, and he stopped many times to rest and to listen to men who talked, some loudly as in great anger, some with hushed voices as in deep sorrow, of the tragedy at Washington. Paul found his way down to Wall Street, where a multitude of men had gathered, and where Garfield, standing on the pedestal of the Washington Statue in front of the Sub-Treasury, was addressing them.

"God reigns!" cried the speaker, "and the Government at Washington still lives."

And with that word of hope to lighten the darkness the throng dispersed, and Paul went back, sorrowing as never in his life before, to the home he had left on the day he went to war. He found his old place at the factory awaiting him, as Mr. Willard had promised it would be; and when, after

a few weeks of rest and recuperation, he was again able to work, he went at the tasks to which he had been accustomed with a pleasure and a zeal which appeared to have been only heightened by the perils through which he had passed.

The period of business activity following the Civil War brought a great increase of prosperity to the firm of Victor Willard & Co. The flash of white-hot iron, the rattle of hammers, the clang of sledges, the thunder of the ponderous machinery were never more manifest and constant than during these years. And in all this activity Paul played no insignificant part. His personal skill, ability, and faithfulness became one of the strong assets of the firm. Nor did he drop out of touch with his former mistress, Mrs. Willard. She followed his career with unfeigned pleasure and loyal interest, and when he came to her home at her not infrequent bidding, he came not as an old servant, but as a favored and familiar guest and friend.

Of the people of Redstone, Paul had heard nothing since the night he left Lyman Gifford's farm with the stolen money in his

pocket. But his old master had received the money he had sent to him on the day he went to war. Of that fact he was assured because the draft had been returned duly indorsed and paid. Not that he yet believed the payment to have washed his conscience clean. It simply settled his material account with Lyman Gifford. His offense against the law of the State and against that higher law laid down for the righteous conduct of human affairs had yet to be reckoned with. He was well aware of that. He suffered from no delusions concerning it. He knew that, some day, somewhere, in one form or another, retribution was bound to reach him. But he did not any longer feel it to be his duty to go back at once to Redstone and declare his guilt and welcome his punishment. It was not worth while blindly to wreck his whole future in order to forestall whatever punishment Divine Providence might have in store for him. When that punishment should come he would welcome it like a man; until that time, like a man he would work out his own destiny.

He thought often of his father, but he no

longer saw him in memory sodden with drink, sitting half asleep in the barroom chair in the gray light of the November morning. Instead he remembered him as the gallant soldier, battle-stained and bloody, of whom he had caught a fleeting glimpse that awful day at Cold Harbor. Yet he did not seek to find him. He had not yet reached the point where he felt that either his own good or his father's was dependent on the reëstablishment of their personal relations. He felt that any effort he might make in this direction would result naturally in his own identification and in the disclosure of his whereabouts to those who might be interested adversely to his welfare in finding him. And he was not yet ready to go up for his punishment. So he made no inquiries, gained no information, and knew absolutely nothing of what might have happened at Redstone or to its people since he ran away. But he was not to remain much longer in ignorance. Mr. Willard called him into the office one day in the late fall of 1867 to talk to him about a large order for machinery that had just been placed with the firm, on

which order the shops would soon be put to work.

"It goes," said Mr. Willard, "to a town called Redstone, up in Pennsylvania. It will be the machinery for a big woolen mill to be erected there. I am impressed with the character and standing of the people who are back of the enterprise, and I want the work done promptly and well."

At the name "Redstone" Paul started and his face flushed, but as Mr. Willard was smoothing out a roll of tracings he did not notice the young man's surprise. Recovering himself immediately, Paul asked: —

"What power will they use?"

"Water," was the reply. "They have a magnificent falls there, with a long stretch of level lowland back of it, and they are to treble the size of the dam already built there, and store a body of water which will furnish them power at all times. You know nothing about the location, of course?"

"In a general way I do. I have been there as a boy. Is it outside capital that is making the investment?"

"Partly. But the money comes most

largely from residents of the town and vicinity who, I understand, have prospered wonderfully in the last few years. The power made possible by the falls has already been utilized in part, a number of small mills and other active industries have grown up there, and now this is to be the prime effort of the people to make their town a large manufacturing center."

"Good!" responded the young man warmly. "I hope the effort will succeed. I shall take an especial interest in getting out the work."

And he did take an especial interest. Into every plate and wheel, into every rod and rivet that was fashioned under his guidance, his heart went; and many a time he saw them, in his mind's eye, fitted into their appointed places, combined into a perfect whole, pulsing and whirring and clattering under the shadow of the falls at Redstone.

Early in May the work was so far completed that the first consignment was ready for shipment to its destination. It was then that Mr. Willard called Paul into his office and told him that it was his wish that the

young man should go to Redstone to install the machinery on behalf of the firm. The request came not only as a surprise, but also as a shock. He had not before been sent out to make installations, and it had been farthest from his thought that he would be requested in this case to go. He did not at once respond to the request. He could not. The announcement had taken away, for the moment, his power of speech. Mr. Willard, observing his hesitation, continued: —

“I am sorry to have to send you out; we need you greatly in the shop, as you know. But Birchard will not get back from Vermont in time, and you are the only other one who is thoroughly familiar with this complete design and with the manner in which the work should be set up.”

“But, Mr. Willard,” — he had found his voice at last, — “there are reasons why I cannot go to Redstone.”

“Reasons?” exclaimed the man, thoroughly surprised; “what reasons? We are perfectly willing to trust you. You cannot fail to do the work right. I do not understand.”

"My reasons are purely personal and private ones, Mr. Willard. I lived in or near Redstone when I was a boy. I came from there to New York."

"And does that fact prevent you from returning there for this purpose?"

"Under the circumstances it does. To be frank with you, I ran away. When I came to New York I came as a runaway apprentice."

Mr. Willard laughed. "So that, then, is your secret. We imagined it was something of the kind. A runaway apprentice!"

His memory brought up a vision of the white-haired, pale-faced, gentle-voiced lad that had come to them years before through much tribulation, and to have him now identified as a bold and reckless runaway apprentice appeared to amuse him greatly.

"Let me see," he said, after a moment's thought; "how long is it since you came to us?"

"It was in the fall of '59, sir."

"I remember. And how old are you now?"

"Twenty-four."

"And you are afraid, if you go back there, that your old master will have you arrested

and hold you to your task? Why, that's nonsense! You are of age now. You are your own master."

"Well, it's not so much the fear of being apprehended and held for service as it is the fear of being scorned and rebuked and reviled by those who used to know me. When I lived there I was called 'Pink-eye,' 'White-head,' 'Milk-sop,' and other names equally appropriate and offensive. I fear that these names, and the disrespect and contempt which they imply, would follow me back to Redstone."

"Nonsense, again! Besides, no one would know you. You have — changed your name, and your appearance is no more like that of the boy of ten years ago than your appearance is like mine to-day."

"Yes, I know. I know. No doubt that is true. I hope it is. But, Mr. Willard, I would prefer not to go. Really I would. There are reasons — reasons which I cannot tell you."

He had stumbled along, embarrassed and abashed, and the man, seeing that he was really in earnest, and that back of his broken excuses and hesitating manner lay some

dominant cause for his refusal, a cause which, if known, would be recognized as just, and desiring to save him any possible embarrassment or humiliation, yielded to the young man's request.

"Oh, well," he said, "if you feel that way about it, of course. I do not want to compel you to go against your wish or judgment. We'll send Ridley. Perhaps, by running up there occasionally myself, we can manage it. You need not go."

"Thank you, Mr. Willard."

Paul left the presence of his employer, greatly relieved, yet ill at ease. For the first time since he had been in Victor Willard's employ he had balked at a task given him to do. He knew that it was not a just or grateful thing to refuse to go. But what other course lay open to him? Suppose he should go back to Redstone; what would happen? Who would be the first to penetrate through his disguise and recall and spread broadcast the old, disgraceful story of his crime? It was too great a risk. He felt that he should not be asked to undergo it. It would be unjust to himself to return. And yet, back of

all these excuses, underlying them, surrounding them, was the persistent, ever-present thought that not to go would be cowardly. He went to his evening meal, but he could not eat. He went to his room, but he could not sleep. His mind was in a tumult. Back to Redstone! Back to Redstone! The words stared at him from every wall. They rose to meet him at every corner. He could not shut them out from his eyes. He could not stop the sound of their monotonous reiteration in his mind. Back to Redstone! Back to the scenes of his early unhappiness, to the place where his bitter youth was spent; back to the grave of his dear, dead mother, to the haunts and perhaps to the presence of the father whose waywardness had plunged them all into sorrow and disgrace; back to the scene of his first and only crime, repented of, oh, how bitterly! but forgiven? forgotten? — who could tell? And even as he pondered these things in his mind there came over him a kind of dreadful desire to go. The thing had a sort of growing fascination for him, such as the spider's net may have for the fly, or the serpent's eye for the fluttering

bird. He felt as those feel who seek out danger for the joy of facing it. And with all this there came to his soul the conviction that here lay his chance — his one and only chance, it might be, placed before him by a merciful Providence — to work out his own regeneration, to put himself right before the world, to bring himself, through whatever risk or sacrifice, to that plane of manhood on which he must eventually stand or count his whole life lost.

When morning came, his mind was made up and at rest. He went to his employer and said: —

“Mr. Willard, if the offer is still open, I will accept it and go to Redstone.”

“Good! That’s splendid. What led you to change your mind?”

“I thought the whole thing over last night and — well, I believe it will work out better that way.”

“I’m sure it will. Next Monday, then, you start.”

CHAPTER IX

IT was on a May afternoon, following his decision to go to Redstone, that Paul Bolton, known now for many years as Paul Friend, swung himself down from a railway train at the Mooresville Station and looked about him. There had been little change in the ten years that had passed since he last saw the place. The Depot Hotel still stood across the street, and even as Paul looked toward it the barroom door opened and the old bartender, a little more corpulent and red of face than in former days, came out and crossed over to the station. Having arranged for the transfer of his baggage, Paul hurried out to find transportation to Redstone; for the new railroad, although practically completed to that point, had not yet been opened. In front of the post-office he saw Hamilton Polley ready to start out on his return trip. Paul suddenly resolved that he would ride with the old stage-driver. Here would be a good test of the complete-

ness of the change in his appearance. If the old man, of all persons in Redstone, did not recognize him, he felt that he was safe until such time as he might choose to disclose his own identity. So he approached him.

“Is this the Redstone stage?” he asked.

The driver looked him over carefully before answering. “Yes,” he said finally; “goin’ up?”

“Yes, I’d like to ride with you if I may.”

“Jump right in. Throw your bag under the back seat.”

Paul did as he was bid and they clattered off. There were several stops to be made before they got fairly under way. There were parcels to be called for and two other passengers to be taken on. But these two passengers rode only a few miles into the country, and, after they had been dropped, Paul and the driver were alone, sitting together on the front seat. The old man had aged much in the ten years. He had grown thin and wrinkled; but his sandy hair and beard were not yet entirely gray, nor had he apparently lost any of his old loquacity.

“Ever ben up in these parts before?” he

asked, as they started on after the other passengers had left them.

“Once, when I was a boy,” Paul replied.

“Yes. Well, they ain’t ben much change excep’ this new-fangled railroad business a-cuttin’ up the country an’ a-spilin’ the roads. ’T won’t be safe to travel nowheres along the crick road w’en they git to runnin’ them trains regular. I told Jim Hawkes up to the bank this mornin’ — they ’ve got a bank up to Redstone now. Did n’t know that, did ye?”

“No, I had n’t heard of it.”

“Yes. Lyme Gifford’s president of it. That’s the only thing I’ve got ag’in’ it. But I told Jim this mornin’ that I would n’t put any o’ my money where Lyme Gifford could git a-hold of it.”

“Mr. Gifford must be one of your wealthy men.”

“Oh, he’s made money enough, an’ saved money enough, mostly by skinnin’ other people. But he’s kep’ clear o’ the law, an’ I s’pose he thinks that’s all that’s nessary. He beat me oncet on a buggy I bought off’n ’im. That was twenty-two year ago. He

ain't never had no chance to beat me the secon' time."

"He must be very thrifty."

"Thrifty?" The old stage-driver sniffed scornfully. "Thrifty ain't no proper name fer it. You know what he done w'en his wife died? Haggled with the undertaker over the price of the coffin an' beat 'im down two dollars an' six shillin', by crackey!"

"So his wife is dead?"

"Yes. Went with the heart disease three year ago. Dropped off all of a sudden one Sunday afternoon. He's got his gal yit, though, an', say! I ain't got nothin' ag'inst that gal. She's the salt o' the earth. I ain't sayin' nothin' ag'in' the dead, but where under the canopy she gits her good qualities from the Lord only knows. An' they do say that sence she's had entire charge o' the ol' man she's softened 'im up a good bit. I kind o' think, myself, he's got a leetle mite less stingy an' a leetle mite more human sence the old lady died. Ef he ain't, with that gal around 'im, he ort to be hoss-whipped. I donno but he ort to be hoss-whipped anyway. I've al'ays said so ever

sence he done up that there little allabino that run away from 'im."

"So? How was that?"

"Well, that there little feller — you know what an allabino is, don't ye? a boy with white hair and red eyes — Lyme got 'im out o' the poorhouse an' made 'im work like a nigger on the farm. Other little whelps teased 'im and called 'im 'red-eye' an' 'rabbit-head' an' sich. Well, one night —"

"What was his name, Mr. Polley?"

The stage-driver turned his head and looked at his passenger curiously. There was something about the question, or the tone of voice in which it was put, that reminded him strongly of the questions the albino boy used to ask a decade ago. But this brown-haired, splendidly built, scholarly-looking young fellow bore no resemblance to the pitiful little figure of other days.

"Paul Bolton," replied the driver finally. "Father no good, mother dead. Well, this here little feller, some way or another, let the smokehouse git afire one night. Blame carelessness on his part, I s'pose. Anyway, Lyme took it out o' his hide, an' the boy

run away, an' I never blamed 'im fer it a bit."

"And did he ever come back?"

"No. Funny thing about that. Five hundred o' Lyme's money disappeared the same night. An' the nex' mornin' they overhauled Dick Bolton, the boy's father, down to Mooresville at the Depot Hotel, blind drunk, an', by crackey! the money was in his vest-pocket. He owned up to havin' stole it, said the boy wa'n't no way to blame, an' they sent 'im down to state's prison ag'in, where he'd jest come from fer hoss-stealin'. But Lyme got his money back, all but about fifteen dollars, an' he felt wuss over them fifteen dollars 'n he did w'en his wife died."

Here was news, indeed; the first Paul had heard from Redstone in ten years. Lyman Gifford's wife dead. So she was right, after all, about her weak heart. Ruth grown up to be a charming woman. The stolen money found and returned to its owner. Richard Bolton sent to the penitentiary for the admitted theft. It was all of absorbing interest. Some of it, indeed, was tragically stirring.

"But," inquired Paul anxiously, "did not

the boy afterward pay Lyman Gifford back his money with interest?"

"Not that anybody ever heard of. Ef he did, Lyme got it twicet over an' kep' his mouth shet. But I'm tellin' ye, the boy did n't steal it. An' nobody never heard nothin' from 'im. Nice little feller he was, too. Could n't 'a' ben no nicer boy. Missed him like as ef he'd 'a' ben one o' my own."

"And did Richard Bolton serve time in the penitentiary for the boy's theft?"

"Ain't I told ye twice a'ready the boy did n't steal it? Dick said so 'imself. Penitentiary's the best place fer Dick on general principles, anyway."

The stage-driver lapsed for a time into silent reminiscence, and Paul's mind was filled too full with strange and conflicting thoughts to ask more questions. The country had changed much since he saw it last. New farms had been blocked out and new houses and barns erected. Only one small section of the virgin forest was left skirting a half-mile of the public road between Mooresville and Redstone. All the way along, the line of the new railroad was vis-

ible, following the valley of the creek, crossing the highway now and then, swinging back into the country in only the one place necessary to avoid the grade of the long ascent where a spur of a Moosic foothill ran out and ended in a bluff at the water's edge.

As they approached the Gifford homestead, Paul saw that the farmhouse had been remodeled and greatly improved. A spacious porch decorated it on the front, and a wide lawn swept between the house and the roadway. Just as the stage passed, a girl in white garments came from the open front door, crossed the porch into the sunlight, descended the steps and passed out on to the lawn. She glanced toward the stage, waved a dainty salutation to the driver, and then went on into the shadow of the trees, singing softly as she walked.

"That's her," said Polley. "That's Lyme's gal. Ef he ever gits to heaven, w'ich I doubt, it'll be because she went ahead an' pervailed on 'em to let 'im in."

From here on into Redstone new houses appeared at frequent intervals. Indeed, the town seemed to have reached out till it

touched the very borders of the Gifford farm.

"I ain't ast ye yet," said the driver, as they rounded a corner into the main street of the village, "who ye be nor where ye come from."

He paused expectantly.

"I've no objection to telling you," replied Paul. "I'm here from New York to install the machinery in the new woolen mill. My name is Paul Friend."

"So! Well, young man, ye've got a big job ahead o' ye. Buildin's goin' up over there ye'd lose yerself in, they're so blame big. That concern's goin' to make things hum around here. Ort to see the dam they built above the falls: makes a pond clear up to the old Justin place. They bought perty near the hull crick bottom from Lyme Gifford. Some says they give 'im twenty thousand' dollars fer it, an' some says eighteen. I guess eighteen's about right. Railroad switch runs right into the mill-yard below the falls. That's perty big business, ain't it?"

"It sounds all right to me," responded

Paul, as the stage drew up with a flourish before the new Redstone Inn. The only passenger alighted, paid his fare, and thanked the driver for a pleasant journey.

Redstone had, indeed, taken on new and vigorous life. Utilizing the water-power afforded by the falls, factories had sprung up, the population had doubled, new stores had been built and opened; the town was already in the midst of great prosperity. And now, as a fitting climax to this remarkable growth and progress, the new woolen mills, promising employment to scores of men and girls, were rising at the edge of the town, under the shadow of the falls.

Paul plunged at once into the details and exigency of his work. He did not stop to think of his old life among these people. As Hamilton Polley had not known him, he gave himself little concern about being recognized. Indeed, the men with whom he was associated in this enterprise were men whom he had never known, and who doubtless had never before heard of him. All save Lyman Gifford. As a member of the board of directors of the woolen company, he met

Mr. Gifford not infrequently, and was impressed by his close grasp of the company's affairs and his acute business sense. There was nothing repellent about him now, even to this young man who had suffered at his hands. And if Paul cherished in his heart, when he came to Redstone, any grievance against his old master, he soon forgot it.

The promoters of the enterprise, on the other hand, were deeply impressed with the ability shown by the young mechanic and engineer. As they listened to his clear explanations and advice, and watched the progress of his work, they felt that he was master of his craft and that their property and interests were entirely safe in his hands.

When Sunday morning came, Paul went to the church, in the gallery of which he had sat when a boy, and from which he had always slunk away abashed at the earliest possible moment. He saw Lyman Gifford come in with his deceased wife's sister, and he saw Ruth in the choir and heard her voice as she sang with the others the old-fashioned hymns. He more than half suspected that the grave-faced, clean-cut young fellow who

had conducted him to a pew was the one who had jeered at and assaulted him on that fateful day at school. Later on he learned that his suspicion was correct.

In the afternoon he started out alone, as was his custom, for a Sunday stroll. Almost unconsciously he wandered down the road toward Mooresville, past the Gifford homestead, and on into the hollow where used to stand the brown cottage that had sheltered his mother and him in the days of his childhood. It was not there now. It had given place to a neat two-story modern dwelling, and instead of the straggling rail fence with its dilapidated barway, there was now along the roadside a barrier of painted pickets with an ornamental gate.

On his way back to the village he turned in at the crossroad beyond the Gifford house, and took the well-remembered path across the fields toward Redstone. And down the path, through the springing green of the meadows, in the beauty of the May day, came Lyman Gifford and his daughter. Paul lifted his hat when he met them and would have passed on, but the man stopped him.

"I want you to meet my daughter," he said. "Ruth, this is Mr. Friend who has charge of the work at the mill."

She held out her hand to him and spoke pleasantly. There was no diffidence in her manner, though her cheeks flushed with that modesty which is so becoming to the young.

"I hope your stay here will be pleasant," she said. "We have n't much to offer you, and it must seem very dull to one who has been living in New York. But I think the country is charming in May; don't you?"

"I love the country," replied Paul; "and I never saw it more beautiful than it is to-day."

"I'm so glad you like it," she said. "Did you ever live in the country?"

Paul hesitated a moment before replying. "Once, when I was a boy," he said at last.

"On a farm?" inquired Mr. Gifford.

"Yes, for a time on a farm."

"But I'll venture to say," insisted the man, trying to be jocose, "that you never got up before daylight in the morning, and kindled the fires, and brought the water, and milked the cows, and chopped the wood."

Paul flushed and laughed a little.

“Why,” he said, “I believe I have done something of that kind. But it is so long ago now that it would n’t be safe to trust me without teaching me over again.”

The girl, with her finer intuition, saw that the topic of conversation was embarrassing to the young man and intervened to change it.

“I hope you have comfortable quarters in town,” she said. “And whenever you care to come so far — really it’s almost a mile — we shall be very glad to see you at Locust Farm.”

He thanked her, and so they separated and he went on alone.

Weeks afterward, as he thought of this interview, he said to himself that it was the beginning. Yet, as he thought further, he decided that the beginning was that day when he was riding in the stage and she descended the porch steps and crossed the lawn and Ham Polley told him that the girl was Lyman Gifford’s daughter. But when he thought still more deeply, and dissected his own mind more carefully, he knew that

the real beginning was back there in the days of his boyhood, when he was an albino apprentice, jeered at and imposed upon, and she had given him sympathy and comfort, and had tried to make his burdens lighter and to ease the aching of his heart.

Before he returned to the village that afternoon Paul went up to the graveyard on the hill and found the lot where his mother had been buried, overgrown with weeds and brambles, with no stone to mark her grave. It was pathetic and distressing, but Paul knew that he would not yet dare to evince any public interest in Mollie Bolton's last resting-place. So he went home through the waning sunlight and was sad at heart.

Two weeks later he was called before the board of directors of the Redstone Woolen Mills Company, at a regular meeting, and offered the position of permanent manager. While the salary would not be greatly in advance of that which he was receiving from his present employer, there was a tentative promise that it would be increased as the business prospered. The board had been impressed by Paul's ability as a manager as

well as an engineer, and they desired to avail themselves of his continued and broader service. He promised to give them his answer in four days, and went out from their presence with a burdened and a storm-tossed mind. He, the despised albino, the subject of mockery beyond endurance in this very village, the son of a pauper mother and a convict father, the runaway apprentice, the midnight thief, the liver of a daily lie, what a daring challenge to fortune it would be for him to accept this post, relying upon the ignorance of his patrons for the successful carrying-on of his own deceit and the furtherance of his own ends. Would it be right, would it be just, would it be decent to impose like this on these men who were trusting him? When his duplicity should be finally discovered, as it was sure to be in time, what would happen then? What consideration could he expect at the hands of Lyman Gifford?

He wrote to his employer, Victor Willard, asking for advice, and Mr. Willard replied, couching his letter in the kindest terms, counseling him to accept the offer. A post-

script in Mrs. Willard's own hand was added to the letter, congratulating him on his good fortune and success. On the third night after the offer was made, he sat up all night, walking the floor and debating the proposition in his mind. And when morning came he had decided to stay. He made his final decision, not in any spirit of self-pride or of self-abasement, not with the desire to forward his own fortunes at the expense and through the ignorance of others, but in a sincere belief that here was the place and this was the time, through whatever difficulties might gather, and in spite of whatever obstacles might intervene, to work out his own destiny. And as he had dared to come to Redstone, so he dared to stay.

In July the mill was completed. The big wheels turned. The looms sang. The buzz and whir of machinery smote the air. But there was music in the sound to the ears of the people of Redstone. It meant prosperity for the town, and it brought prosperity. Other factories were erected. Other people came. The streets of the village lengthened day by day. No one could foresee the cessa-

tion of this marvelous growth. Rising like a giant over the heads and shoulders of all lesser activities was the great industry guided and managed by Paul Friend. He gave to it whatever was best of his thought, his experience, and his skill. And from the day the mill doors opened for business the proposition was a success.

But Paul found time, nevertheless, to enter guardedly into the social life of the town. There was not a public gathering at which his presence was not desired. There was no door that was not open to him. There was no family fireside at which he would not have been a welcome guest. Distinguished and scholarly in appearance, courteous in manner, and well-informed on all topics, he was a distinct addition to the social as well as the business life of Redstone. And no man in the community was more cordial to him than Lyman Gifford, and no woman in the community was more gracious to him than Lyman Gifford's daughter Ruth. But every night when he went to his bed he said to himself: "Paul Bolton, for one more day you have lived a lie."

What man or woman, indeed, in the whole community, if it were known that he was the albino, the son of the jail-bird, the thief who stole Lyman Gifford's money — what man or woman would be willing to speak to him on the street, much less in the home. And if Ruth Gifford knew! Ah, if Ruth Gifford knew! And here he always reached the end of speculation; for until Ruth Gifford did know he had no right as a man of honor to accept her hospitality, ever more and more graciously bestowed; and when at last she should know, doubtless her door would be barred against him as he deserved, and then clouds and darkness would be his portion, indeed.

The summer days went by and autumn came. And the whir and clatter of a hundred wheels and looms were mellowed in the autumn haze till out at Locust Farm, to the ears of Ruth Gifford, let us say, the noise sounded like pulsing music on the air.

As for Paul, the days brought him no happiness and the nights no comfort. More and more the weight of his old offense and his new duplicity oppressed him. There came a time

when he felt that he could no longer bear it, that something must be done to end a situation which had become impossible. But it was in vain that he cast about in his mind to discover what he should do. He might confess, and stand the consequences; that would be too deeply humiliating. He might resign; that would be inexcusable. He might disappear in the darkness; that would be cowardly.

One October night, pacing up and down the floor of his room in a private house near the mill, he resolved that before the morning broke he would decide absolutely on his course of action, and that having once decided he would carry out his resolution no matter where the path might lead. So through the hours of the night he wrestled with his soul. But at midnight he had reached no conclusion, nor yet at two o'clock, nor even at three. Then he slipped on his greatcoat, for the night was cold, and went out to see if, in the moonlight, under the stars, in the keen breath of the morning, the mists that clouded his soul would not clear away. Instinctively he took the road

toward Mooresville. Up on the hill, as he passed along, he could see the face of a marble shaft shining in the moonlight. There was the village graveyard. There was where his dead mother lay at rest — at rest. But his father? — what of him? It came to him suddenly that in all his thoughts and plans and struggles of the past few months his father had had little place, save as one of the shadows that had darkened his life heretofore, and might, nay, probably would, cast its sinister gloom over his future. He had gathered, little by little, as he could do it without danger, the facts that Richard Bolton had left the prison for the battlefield; that he had returned from the war, distinguished for bravery, and bearing honorable scars; that he had fallen anew into evil ways, had disappeared for a time, and then had returned to his old haunts more shiftless, more dissolute, more utterly disreputable than ever in his life before. So he had drifted into and out of the community, gone sometimes for many months at a time, as he had been now, pitied, shunned, and despised by all who knew him. Yet the truth was borne

home to Paul Bolton this night, by self-conviction, that this drunken derelict was his father to whom he owed a son's duty at least to make an effort for his redemption. Why had he not considered this before? And then, piercingly sharp, cutting him to the quick, came the further thought that this man who had been too weak to withstand the temptation of the cup, too reckless to turn aside from petty crime on his own account, had, in a strange emergency, been strong enough, and brave enough, and loving enough to take upon his own shoulders the opprobrium of an offense and the penalty for a crime which he did not commit, in order that his boy might go unscathed in reputation and unfettered in body. And how had that boy repaid the father for the sacrifice? Shame, remorse, disgust with his own selfishness, filled Paul Bolton's heart as he strode along through the night, and then a mighty desire to reach out and grasp and save, if human effort might do it, that one to whom he owed so much, that one so nearly, but haply not yet quite, lost.

He passed Lyman Gifford's homestead,

lying white and still in the moonlight, holding what precious occupants, waiting what undreamed-of revelations.

And then, from around a bend in the road, he saw a man approaching him, a man who walked slowly, waveringly, glancing from right to left as he came, stopping and half turning as if to try to escape when he saw some one striding toward him.

The next moment Paul confronted the traveler.

"Who are you?" he asked, "and where are you going?"

"I'm going to Redstone," replied the man, "and it does n't matter who I am; I've done nothing against the law."

CHAPTER X

PAUL BOLTON knew in an instant that the man who stood facing him in the moonlight, on the Mooresville road, was his father. It was not so much by his appearance that he recognized him, for he had greatly changed, as it was by his voice. If he had heard that voice in the remotest corner of the earth, he would have known it. But he presented, indeed, a pathetic picture as he stood there with bent knees, trembling, whether with cold or fright it would have been hard to say, looking fearfully yet half defiantly at the man who had halted him. His thin clothing was soiled and ragged; from under his apology for a hat his gray hairs straggled; and his white, gaunt face, with the moonlight on it, was both pathetic and terrible.

But Paul Bolton's heart leaped with joy. The opportunity for which he had been longing was at his door. He thrust away from him all pride, all aversion, all emotions of

any kind that would fetter his conscience or his conduct, and laid a kindly hand on the man's arm.

"I'm going back to Redstone," he said. "I'll walk with you. You're shivering. It's a cold night and you have no overcoat. Here, put this one on. It's too big for you, but it's better than none."

He stripped off his own greatcoat as he spoke and held it up before the man, who put his arms into it hesitatingly, wondering whether he was the recipient of kindness or of hidden cruelty.

"I don't know you, stranger," he said at last; "I don't know you, but that's the kindest thing that's been done for me in five years."

Paul buttoned the coat up to the man's chin and started forward with him.

"Where will you stop in Redstone?" he asked.

"I don't know," was the reply; "I have n't decided."

"Have you friends there?"

"None to whom I would care to go."

"You might stop at the Redstone Inn."

The man looked up suspiciously at his new-found friend as though he felt that he was being made the butt of a quiet joke. Then he stopped and faced him.

"I may as well tell you," he said. "I may as well be frank with you. I have n't a penny. I'm homeless. I'm an outcast. I'm something more; something so despicable that you can't afford to be seen walking on the street with me when morning comes. I'm going to Redstone, where they know me and disdain me, because some one, for the sake of old times, may give me a bite to eat and a fire to sit by for an hour, when a stranger not knowing my faults and offenses would spurn me for my looks."

His voice trembled and broke as he concluded.

It needed but a look at the man's face to show that he was suffering. Haggard, hollow-cheeked, hollow-eyed, ghastly in the moonlight, it told the story of his hardships.

Paul's heart was stirred with pity.

"I'll get you something to eat," he said, "when we get to Redstone, and a place to

sleep. Never mind what you are or have been, you shall be taken care of now."

They started on again, but the man's step wavered and he walked but slowly. He himself knew that his movement was lagging and erratic.

"I'm not drunk to-night," he explained. "I've had nothing to drink for eighteen hours. That's small credit to me, for I've had nothing to buy drink with, and no one would give it to me. But, at any rate—to-night — I'm not — drunk."

"No," replied Paul, and he repressed his own tears as he spoke; "no, you're not drunk, but you're weak and ill and you need help. Here, take my arm."

So, guided and assisted by his son, the father stumbled on. But they had often to stop by the roadside and sit down for a brief rest. They had often to pause in the middle of the traveled way while the man looked fearfully behind him, or threw searching glances from side to side.

"I don't see why those things persist in following me," he said. "I have done them no harm and I have nothing for them. Back

therein that piece of woods where it was very dark, they came so close to me — I tried to run — it was fearful.”

“Never mind! I’ll not let them harm you. Come along. We must make haste. It’ll soon be morning.”

But through Paul’s body swept a chill, not driven by the autumn frost, but a chill of apprehension and of genuine fear. He recognized the symptoms of that disease which is a constant menace to the drunkard, and which at the last hounds him horribly to his grave. So he girded himself for a new and desperate fight, and they struggled on.

Already the morning gray was coming, the stars were paling in the east, and the full moon grew dim as it dropped down into the western haze.

At last, through the village streets, stopping now and then at a convenient stepping-stone to sit and rest, Paul half led, half carried the almost helpless man until his own boarding-house was reached. When he opened the door with his night-key and let himself in, the mistress of the house, already

up and about her duties, came and looked into the hall in apparent alarm.

"It is I, Mrs. DeVanney," Paul said. "I found a sick man down the road here, and, with your permission, I'll take him to my quarters and see what I can do for him."

She looked at her boarder's guest by the dim light of the lamp that shone through the dining-room doorway and hesitated.

"I'll be responsible for him," continued Paul, "in every way. I simply want to help him and get him on his feet."

"Well," she said finally, "if it was any one else but you I would n't think of it; but I guess it'll be all right."

"Thank you, Mrs. DeVanney!"

Paul dragged his father upstairs, dropped him into an easy-chair, and, after a few minutes' rest, undressed him, bathed him, put clean night-clothing on him, and helped him into bed. Afterward he went downstairs and got him a cup of strong clear coffee and a little warm food. The man ate and drank with avidity and then settled down to go to sleep. But when Paul came up from his own break-

fast his father was not yet asleep. He was hot and feverish and moved uneasily about in the bed.

"You are my good Samaritan," he said finally to Paul; "do me one more kindness, an unspeakable kindness. Bring me some whiskey. I shall die without it." He stretched out his arms appealingly as he spoke.

But Paul shook his head. "No," he replied; "you cannot have it. You would only suffer the more later on."

"Just three drops!"

"No, not a single drop."

The sick man turned in his bed with a groan, and after a little he began to murmur, unintelligibly, to himself. It was plain that here was work for a physician, and a physician was sent for, who confirmed, without hesitation, Paul's worst fears, and advised the immediate employment of a nurse who could be constantly at the invalid's bedside. So Paul went out to find a nurse. His first thought was of Hamilton Polley, whose occupation of a stage-driver and mail-carrier had been gone since the opening of the

new railroad, and who had as yet found no steady employment.

“What!” he exclaimed, when the proposition was made to him; “me nuss Dick Bolton; that good-fer-nothin’ loafer!”

“But,” said Paul, “the man is very sick. He must have constant and careful attention. I found him on the road this morning nearly dead. It is only common humanity to try to save him. I can’t attend to my business and nurse him myself, and it will be a man’s work to take care of him. You must come, Hamilton.”

“Well, seein’ as it’s you,” said Polley, finally, “I will. But they ain’t no other livin’ human bein’ could injuce me to nuss Dick Bolton through the tremors.”

So Hamilton Polley was installed as nurse and Paul went about his accustomed tasks; not with a light heart, indeed, but with a heart purified, ennobled, vitalized in the tremendous effort he was putting forth to save a human being. It was, indeed, no holiday task. For the sick man there were days of distress and nights of terror, followed by collapse. There were moments when life

hung poised so delicately in the balance that the merest breath might have wafted the hesitating soul to other shores.

But Richard Bolton lived. He came through the ordeal cleansed, chastened, and renewed. Before the winter snow lay heavily on the earth he was able to sit at the window of his benefactor's room and look with clear eyes to the tall chimneys and the spacious roofs of the mill buildings on the flat below.

That Paul should have taken in this wretched and besotted wanderer and cared for him and saved him was a nine days' wonder in Redstone. What possible interest he could have in this homeless derelict no one could understand. That his action was simply based on a charitable impulse born at a critical moment to develop into a deed of great humanity, every one came finally to believe. As for Richard Bolton himself, he had not yet ceased wondering at the big-hearted charity — entirely uncalled-for, so far as he could see — of his new-found friend. His own son, he told Paul one day, could not have done more for him. He spoke often and affectionately of this son, a white-

haired, gentle lad who had dropped suddenly out of his sight many years ago, and whom he now scarcely hoped ever to see again. It was apparent that his fondness for the boy was still a living force in his life and that he would gladly have taken him in his arms as he used to do of old. And Paul heard him with a swelling heart, a heart that grew warmer day by day toward this wanderer who had struggled up, with his help, out of the mire of the dregs of dissipation into the clear sunlight of a new day.

When Bolton was able to work, Paul found him a place at the mill where the task was not beyond his strength, but he kept him still at the boarding-house, and stayed with him and watched over him as a mother might watch over a weak and dependent child. For he knew that all danger for his father was not yet passed, and that if strong temptation were to assail him in an unguarded moment, the work of the last few months would doubtless be wholly undone and the fight for a human life would have been made in vain. Especially of late had Paul grown anxious, for he had seen in his

father's eyes a hungry look, in his face the expression of an imperious and unappeased desire, in his restless and untiring movement an intimation that it was but a step to the edge of the pit out of which he had so lately climbed. So he stayed with him day and night. He gave up every pleasure, every civic and social relation, every task outside of his duty to his employers, to watch the man whom his sacrifice and struggle had gone so far to save.

And the people of the town looked on and understood. And Ruth Gifford looked on and understood. Not that any one dreamed of his relation to the man whom he was so desperately trying to hold fast against temptation, but every one honored and loved him for putting his hand and heart to the task, and wished him God-speed and abundant success. There was not a person in the town, not a seller of liquor, not a loafer of the streets who would have been base enough, even had he dared, to furnish Richard Bolton with drink.

One night Paul was wakened from an uneasy slumber by a sense of some impending

disaster. He sprang from his bed, lighted a candle, and hurried into his father's room. Richard Bolton was not there. His clothes were missing; his cap and overcoat as well. So the dreaded and half-expected thing had come to pass. With a great sinking of the heart Paul rushed back into his room and put on his clothes, cap and greatcoat. Then he ran lightly down the stairs and out into the night. He knew instinctively which way to turn, and started with great strides down the street that led toward Mooresville. Beyond the border of the town he took the middle of the road where the surface of beaten snow and ice was hard and even. The night was clear and the stars were shining. He had no fear of falling. On past the Gifford homestead he hurried, around the bend in the road and down the hill. In the hollow, near where once stood the cottage of his boyhood, he saw ahead of him the object of his search. When the fugitive man heard quick footsteps behind him, he turned in his tracks and waited. He knew instinctively who had followed him.

“Richard Bolton,” said Paul, “is this

honorable? Is it just? Do you owe nothing either to me or to yourself?"

"You do not know," replied the man. "You cannot conceive. The thirst is irresistible, uncontrollable, maddening. I must satisfy it, and I will." He turned his face again toward Mooresville and started on.

Then Paul laid a firm hand on his shoulder and held him where he stood. "Stop!" he said. "You shall not go. I say you shall not go."

"And I say," replied the man defiantly, "that I will go. What right have you to stop me?"

"The right of one who found you in the gutter and made you decent, and who insists that you remain a man."

"That's not enough."

"The right of one who has watched you for months as a mother might watch her baby to keep it from stumbling to its death, and who demands your obedience as a reward for his vigilance."

"That's not enough. Why speak of it? You thought you were doing me a kindness. You were putting me to the rack. You do

not know how terrible this thirst is. You never felt it."

"I know it's terrible. That's why I say you shall not go. It has robbed you of every feeling of pride, of respect, of decency, of gratitude to one who, as you yourself have said, has been to you like a son."

"Oh, you! You're neither kith nor kin. You had a theory to work out. You tried it on me and it has failed. That's all — it has failed. I am utterly beyond salvation, and I'm going to live; to live if it's but for a day. Let me go! Do you hear me? Take off your hand!"

He raised his free arm as if to strike loose the firm grip on his shoulder. Then there flashed into Paul's mind the knowledge that the hour for which he had long waited was now here; that the moment of revelation was at hand.

"Father," he said, "I appeal to you as your son."

Richard Bolton's threatening arm halted in mid air.

"My son?" he faltered.

"Yes, father, your son. Else why should

I have done these things? Else why should I have come for you to-night? Is not blood thicker than water? It's the call of the blood, father, the call of the blood."

The man's arm suddenly fell to his side as though palsied. He did not doubt nor disbelieve. He could not in the darkness see plainly the face that fronted him, but there was that in the appealing voice that went home to the inner depths and memories of his heart; that wakened old visions of a gentle, white-haired lad, and of a tender, patient wife and mother lying forever asleep to-night under the snow on the hill.

"My son," he repeated; and then, subdued, broken, repentant, he flung himself, weeping, into the young man's arms.

Ah! but that was a glorious walk back to Redstone in the crisp winter air under the starlit sky. Father and son had found each other, and both rejoiced in the finding. It was true that one of them was a reclaimed drunkard, still struggling on the brink of the pit from which a loving and heroic son had rescued him, that the other was an albino in disguise, masquerading under a false name

and personality, and that both of them were confessed and repentant thieves. But the very fact of their old delinquencies and misfortunes, so intertwined in purpose and effect, drew them irresistibly to each other, and bound them together in a mutual confidence and love that could not be broken.

When they reached home they slipped quietly up to their rooms without arousing the inmates of the house, and no one ever knew from the lips of either of them the story of that tragic and joyful midnight walk. Friendship had not prevailed with him, sacrifice had not moved him, but somehow the knowledge that this man, who had given so much of himself to redeem him, was no other than his own son, wrought so elemental a change in Richard Bolton's nature as to give him new strength and sure hope in his splendid fight for freedom. Not that the vigilance of either father or son was yet relaxed. No careless door was ever left open that might lead to another fall. But as the days and weeks went by and the clear eye and steady hand and calm persistence in hard labor and refreshing sleep were always with

him, it became more and more apparent that the battle which this one man had waged for a lifetime against his ancient enemy was all but won.

And so, as the spring days came on, Paul relinquished, little by little, the burden of his care for his father, and gave renewed attention to the things in which he had been interested before he had taken upon himself the work of redemption. But, unhappily, the burdens he had borne for his father's sake, and had now let go, were succeeded by burdens of his own. The old questions arose, the old problems were presented anew. He felt that every day he lived was but another day of false pretense, of deliberate deceit, of self-humiliation and abasement. Very often father and son discussed with each other the unsatisfactory and anomalous situation, but as often as they discussed it they agreed that the secret must be kept and the deception continue until a more opportune time should come to make the revelation. For they doubted not that the effect of a disclosure of Paul's identity would be disastrous to his fortunes, and Paul feared that his father had

not yet reached that degree of unalterable firmness, that supreme height of self-confidence and self-restraint which would hold him fast in the face of disaster. But then there was also Ruth Gifford, in whose home and society, after the stress of the winter days, he had found renewed pleasure and delight. Oh! if he were but a free man, with no unhappy boyhood history to face and frighten him, with no debasing secrets locked fast in his breast, with nothing hidden that the whole world might not know and be welcome to the knowledge, what happiness might not be in store for him! But irresistibly as her charms drew him to her, his own conscience and cowardice dragged him away. To strive to be indifferent toward her when his whole soul was yearning for her — had it not been pathetic and tragic, it would surely have been ludicrous. For if Paul imagined that his preference for Lyman Gifford's daughter had gone unnoticed by the people of Redstone, or that it was not absolutely patent to the young lady herself, he was deplorably mistaken. No one who ever saw them together could fail to

notice the tenderness in his voice when he spoke to her, or his manifest pleasure when he was in her presence. Even the sound of her name brought the light into his face and the quick flush to his cheek. As Hamilton Polley said one day, "Why under the blue canopy of heaven he don't pop the question to her as a man ort to, an' hev' done with it," was more than the gossips themselves could understand. But Polley, who was Paul's firmest friend and most outspoken admirer, always added: "You can depend on it, though, they's some good reason. He ain't holdin' off fer jest pure deviltry an' carelessness. He's the cleanest and honestest an' bravest young feller that ever lived in Redstone. I know what I'm sayin'. See what he done fer Dick Bolton! A man 't 'll do as much as that fer sech a God-fersaken wretch as him, that wa'n't nothin' to 'im no-way, jest out o' the blame goodness o' his heart — well, he ain't fur removed from the saints an' martyrs I say, an' the miracle-workers, too."

And the people of Redstone were pretty generally agreed with Hamilton Polley. In-

deed, the regeneration of Richard Bolton, as they saw it, was little short of a miracle. What power had this man possessed to transform the reckless vagabond, the besotted inhabitant of the gutter into a self-supporting, self-respecting gentleman? Clean, sober, intelligent, courteous, the reclaimed drunkard went about his daily tasks at the mill; tasks which increased ever in responsibility and hardness as he was able to bear the burden, in a way which commended him not only to his employers, but to all the people of Redstone.

One evening in April, while it was yet twilight, Richard Bolton took his son with him to the graveyard on the hill. Much to Paul's surprise he found that the lot in which his mother lay had been cleared, graded, and sodded, and that a neat and appropriate headstone had been erected at her grave.

"Father," he said, "who has done this?"

"The one," was the reply, "who neglected her in her lifetime. I did not want to speak to you of it till it was done, lest something — might happen. But I resolved, the day I went to work, that the first money I earned,

beyond enough to meet my bare necessities, should go for this. I think I have arranged it as she would wish. Paul, I have never known, I have never realized, until these last days how patient and gentle and sweet she was through years of such sorrow and humiliation and cruelty as few men have ever brought upon the women who loved them. I wonder, when I think of it — I wonder at the forbearance of Almighty God.”

But Paul could not speak. He put his arm about his father's shoulder, and together through the gathering darkness they walked back to the town.

Spring, beautiful, jubilant, riotous, swept down upon the land. And still, for Paul Bolton, the morning of decision had not dawned, the hour of confession had not come, the day of what dread possibilities, of what uncertain disaster, had not been fixed nor set apart. But the time was not far distant; he did not know it, but the time was not far distant when his problem should be irrevocably solved and his destiny made unmistakably clear. Events unforeseen by any human eye, undreamed of by any human

imagination, were approaching out of the infinite, and would soon encircle and engulf, in a heart-searching and heart-clearing climax, both Paul Bolton and those in Redstone with whose fortunes his own fortunes were so closely intertwined.

CHAPTER XI

THE spring rains that year in Redstone, as throughout the country, were heavy and continuous. Water dripped and ran everywhere. The roads were rivers of mud. Miniature ponds lay in the hollows of the green fields. The river, never before so high in late April, dashed down the jagged slope of the falls and tumbled into the clouds of yellow foam at the base with a roar that all but drowned the clatter of the looms. But the work at the big mill went merrily and prosperously on.

One evening Hamilton Polley, now night-watchman at the factory, came down to his task with news. The first victim of spotted fever had been stricken down in Redstone.

An epidemic of cerebro-spinal meningitis, known in those days by its common name of black or spotted fever, had swept up through the Pennsylvania coal regions and thence into the valley of the Lackawanna, increasing in virulence as it advanced, until the city of

Carbondale lay helpless and panting in its grip. In that community hundreds had been stricken, and fifty out of every hundred attacked by the disease had met a quick and terrible death. And Carbondale was only forty miles from Redstone. Here and there, between the two towns, isolated cases had appeared, but now the news that Hamilton Polley brought was that the disease had found its first victim in the very heart of Redstone. The next day three more cases were discovered, and the first one stricken was already dead. People went to their homes that night soberly and in dread. When on the following day no new cases appeared, they breathed a little easier and hoped that the scourge would pass them over with a touch. But on the third day, Friday, a full half-dozen persons, old and young, came down with the disease. Then the people of Redstone pulled themselves together and made ready for the siege. Carbondale had been devastated and decimated and shut out from the world. Perhaps a like fate awaited Redstone. Physicians hurried about with grave and apprehensive

faces. People met on the street-corners and in public places and talked over the situation with hushed voices as though fearful of disturbing the sick. When Sunday came a full score were lying ill and some had already found relief in the long sleep. The malady struck its victims suddenly and fiercely. There was the nausea, then the headache, the hardened muscles, the delirium, the agony, followed in many cases by coma and death. Sometimes the end came within a few hours after the first symptoms were manifest.

Again, after Sunday, there was a lull. Three days went by and only two new cases had developed. Then, with malicious and terrible suddenness and fierceness, in less than twenty-four hours forty new victims lay panting and groaning in the grip of the awful visitant, and twenty new graves were being hastily dug in the graveyard on the hill.

Redstone was terror-stricken. Scores of people fled from their homes by road, by railroad, to escape the scourge. Then the trains passed through the village without

stopping, and then Redstone was quarantined by the outside world. But the grim tragedy of disease and death went on. Stores were closed. Business was suspended. The mills stopped running. The streets were deserted save by hurrying doctors and slow-moving hearses, and men and women bent on errands of mourning or of mercy. Almost every other house had death as a visitor. The chief burgess of the town was stricken. Half the members of the Town Council were either in their beds or in their graves.

The old doctor, who had been with Richard Bolton in those days and nights when he was so sore beset, succumbed to the disease. So did the young preacher, who had been going from house to house to comfort the distressed and pray with the dying. So did scores of men and women in all walks of life, the strong and the weak, fall before the terrible onslaught of this pitiless enemy.

Then followed disorder. It is a sad commentary on the weakness and baseness of human nature that beings in the guise of men should take advantage of a time like this to steal and rob, to enter desolate and

deserted homes for plunder, to waylay helpless victims on the streets at night for purposes of crime. But so it was, and so it has ever been. A public meeting was called to devise means for the protection of the community, and for alleviating, so far as possible, the horrors of disease. The municipal government had broken completely down. It was apparent that some strong and fearless man, with power to choose his own helpers, must, for the time being, be given the reins of government and be authorized to carry out, by any means within the law, such plans as he might propose for the protection and the salvation of the people. And Paul Friend was chosen. He had no family to claim his attention. He had the confidence of the entire community. He had demonstrated his ability as a manager. He was the one strong, able, and fearless man on whom all could depend. He accepted the position, not unwillingly but soberly, with a full sense of the responsibility that attached to it. He set to work at once. He appointed officers and committees. He proceeded to bring order out of chaos, and to stay, so far as

human effort could do it, the ravages of the plague. But the cloud of pestilence still hung low. Here, there, everywhere new victims fell at the touch of the black visitor. Paul heard, one day, that Hamilton Polley had been stricken, and he hurried to his cottage. It was true. The old man lay gasping in the clutch of the enemy.

"I'm done fer, young man," he said, as Paul entered. "Don't matter much. I was about wore out, anyway. Good chance, though, to find out who your friends be, and, would you believe it? — Lyme Gifford's one of 'em. You know what he done yistaday? Sent me a hunderd dollars to pay the undertaker's bill for Marthy. Said he owed it to me one way er another. He's gittin' human, Lyme is."

Then came on an attack of that terrible nausea that accompanies the disease, and Paul left him a little later, weakening toward the almost certain end. When he called again the following day, he found Ruth Gifford standing at the old man's bedside.

"Miss Gifford," he said, "this is no place for you. I asked you ten days ago to stay

out there in your home where the air is pure and where you will have a fair chance."

She looked up at him appealingly as she replied: —

"I had to come. This old man has been my good friend since I was a very little girl. I could not let him die here alone."

"I know. We cannot provide nurses for half the sick. But I have arranged for my — for Richard Bolton to come and stay with Hamilton until —"

"Thank you! It will not be long. It is so pitiful to see them go like this."

She leaned over and pushed back the straggling hair from the old stage-driver's forehead. But he did not know who stood at his bedside. He neither saw nor heard. His mind was wandering back into other scenes. He thought he was on the road from Mooresville to Redstone, driving his horses as in the old days.

"Git up, Joe!" he murmured. "Git up, Jinny! Don't ye never want to git to Redstone? As I was sayin', Paul, my boy, ef any o' them young whelps twits ye on account o' yer hair, knock 'em down. You're as good

as any of 'em. Sure, yer pa don't amount to much, but yer ma, she's a grand good woman, Paul." After a brief pause he continued: "Pore little feller! Pore little feller! Eh? What's that yer sayin'? I can't hear ye. Set still an' speak louder. So! Well, you jes' tell Lyme Gifford 't Ham Polley says—"

"Come, Miss Gifford. You can do nothing for him, and Richard Bolton will be here very soon. You must obey me and go home. I am in authority in Redstone, you know." And Paul took the girl's arm and led her to the outer room.

"I know who it is about whom he is talking," she said, ignoring his command. "It's about a white-haired boy whom we used to call Paul; a son of Richard Bolton. I hurt his feelings once, and he ran away, and I never saw him again. If he were here now, I'd ask him to forgive me. If I have ever caused any one any unhappiness, I would like to be forgiven for it now. It seems to me that this is a time to recast one's life and make ready for whatever God sends to us."

"And if He sends you what you deserve, Miss Gifford, he will send you nothing but

good. He will give you good health and a long life and such happiness as you have given to many others. And you must help Him by leaving this plague-stricken village and going back to your home."

"But there are so many here who need help and comfort: so many who have been kind and good to me. I must go to them, really I must."

"And there are those who need you more and love you better than any who are now sick or in distress. And for their sakes, Miss Gifford, for their sakes —"

"Yes, my father. I forgot. He is very anxious. It is such a dreadful thing. He always foresees calamity. As soon as I call on Mary Fosdick — poor, stricken child — I will hurry back to him."

She started out at the open door, and then turned back.

"I ought to tell you," she said, "how much the people appreciate you. You are doing such a noble work. Father says that if this town is saved, it will be because you have done it, and that, if you live, there will be nothing too good for the town to do for

you. So you must live, Mr. Friend. And to live you must spare yourself. Please do! I ask it."

She looked up at him appealingly, and the flush deepening in her cheeks swept up to her forehead and lost itself in the waves of her sunlit hair. He went forward and took both her hands in his.

"You cannot ask anything of me," he said, "consistent with my duty to these people who have put their trust in me, that I will not strive to do. And if there is one thing above another that will give me strength to do my work and save myself, it is the knowledge that you are solicitous for my welfare!"

He looked down into her eyes as he spoke, but she drew her hands away, and said "Good-bye!" to him and hurried out to her waiting carriage.

When Richard Bolton came, the sick man's delirium had already been followed by stupor, and it was only a matter of waiting to close his eyes and then to dig his grave.

And that grave was dug by Richard Bolton himself, in the moonlight of a cloudless

night. Nor was it the first grave he had dug in these times of terror, nor was it to be the last. Whatever work called for the labor of his hands or the bounty of his heart, that work Richard Bolton did. He spared himself neither day nor night. He nursed the sick, he comforted the dying, he buried the dead. No duty was too hard, no task was too loathsome for him to perform. He gave himself, body and spirit, to the extreme limit of endurance, in behalf of these people who had ignored him and ridiculed him and reviled him in the old days. To one who protested against the extravagance of his service he said: —

“It is but just. It was here that I spent the wasteful and wanton years of my life. It was here that I neglected my own and preyed upon others. It was to these people that I became a burden and a menace and a plague. It was here that my regeneration was accomplished, and it is here, by the help of God, that I shall prove repentance for my past by doing the work that He has set before me.”

And he shouldered his pick and spade,

tools to which he had never before been accustomed, and started toward the hill in the twilight to dig another grave. And because of his example and of his courage and of his splendid moral strength, other men found courage and heart to labor with him. And whenever his name was mentioned in those sad days, there was always some one to say, "Thank God for Richard Bolton!"

And then, one morning, while the pestilence was at its height, word came to the village that Lyman Gifford's daughter had been stricken. Paul found a horse, leaped into the saddle as he had learned to do in other days at the poorhouse, and hurried to Locust Farm. It was true. Ruth was prostrate. Aunt Emma, braced to the task, was nursing the patient, for no other nurse could be had. The helpers on the farm and those who had gathered there for refuge, when they learned that the daughter of the house had been stricken, fled from the place like the terror-stricken cowards that they were. All but Melissa. She still remained, faithful to her task. But no man was left on the entire estate save Lyman Gifford, and he was as

helpless as a child. When Paul leaped from his saddle at the porch, he found the master of the house walking up and down in the sunlight, moaning and wringing his hands.

"I can't stand it!" he cried. "She's all I have, Mr. Friend. You don't know, oh, you don't know!"

"Yes, Mr. Gifford, I know, but we cannot save her by lamenting. We must work. The doctor's buggy is at the post. Is he here?"

"He's upstairs with her now. But he can't help her. He's lost seventy-five per cent of his cases already. He can do nothing — nothing."

The man broke down and began to weep. Paul laid a comforting hand on his shoulder.

"He can do nothing unless we help him," he replied. "You must pull yourself together. You must work. You must fight. We shall not let her die, you and I. You do not know what power there is in determination."

While he was still speaking the doctor came downstairs and out to the porch. On his haggard face was a look of utter hopelessness.

"I'm glad you're here, Friend," he said, "to stiffen up Lyman's backbone. He needs it."

Paul took him to one side. "What are the symptoms?" he asked.

"Oh, the usual symptoms," was the reply. "Chills, nausea, headache, tenderness in the spinal region, contraction of the muscles, the whole horrible list that marks the onset of the disease. By to-night we shall have delirium, by to-morrow prostration, and then —" He waved his hand in a despairing gesture and was silent.

At that moment Lyman Gifford came up demanding to know the worst.

"There is hope, Mr. Gifford," said Paul. "There is always hope. The doctor is doing everything in his power."

"Yes," assented the doctor, mechanically repeating the word, "everything. I have left an opium preparation to be given when the pain and restlessness become distressing. I can do nothing more now. I will come again this evening." He started to go, but turned back again. "You might make a cushion of cracked ice," he said, "to put on

her head. It will reduce the heat and pain there." And he hurried out to his buggy, jumped in and drove rapidly away.

"She should have the ice at once, Mr. Gifford," said Paul. "I have learned that it gives them much relief."

"Yes, of course; I'll send Jim for it now."

The master of the house started quickly down the steps and then as suddenly turned back.

"I forgot," he said bitterly. "Jim left this morning; and William and the boy and all the rest of them, before the cows were milked or any chores done. They ran away like cowards and left me here alone — alone!"

He clenched his hands in futile anger, and then sank down weakly on the porch steps and again burst into tears. But Paul hurried to the icehouse, brought the ice to the kitchen, and, with the help of Melissa, cracked it and made the pack which should bring relief to the sick girl upstairs. With his whole soul torn with anxiety and fear, he did not permit himself to lose his calmness or

his judgment or his tremendous determination that this girl should not die.

When he returned to the front of the house, Lyman Gifford was still there, but he was again walking up and down the porch and moaning and wringing his hands. Again Paul sought to instill into him some hope and some determination to face bravely that which was before him, but he found little response to his appeal. So he called Aunt Emma and gave her some helpful suggestions out of his own experience with the sick, and bade her be diligent and strong-hearted, and promising to come soon again he mounted his horse and rode away. As he turned into the main street of the village he met his father, bound on what errand of helpfulness or mercy he did not inquire.

“Father,” he said, “I wish that as soon as you can do so you would go over to Lyman Gifford’s place and give him some help. His men have all left him, he himself has utterly collapsed, and there is much that needs to be done.”

“Yes, I will go. What about the dear girl there?”

“I do not know, father; do not ask me. She is very ill.”

And he rode on to renewed effort in his work for the people of Redstone. The pestilence had touched him in a vital spot at last, and he felt the awfulness of it as he had not done at any time before, but his strength was not sapped nor his courage weakened, and he plunged anew into the fight against calamity and disease, with a vigor that nothing could abate. Already he had brought order out of chaos. Human rights were respected in the streets of Redstone. Systematic aid was being given to the helpless and the poor. Fresh doctors came to the assistance of those who were exhausted by their labors. Nurses who did not fear the plague were brought in to care for the sick. Redstone was making its fight with a bravery and a determination that were bound to win. And Redstone acknowledged with heartfelt gratitude its obligation to Paul Friend.

When Richard Bolton reached the Gifford homestead that morning, he found Lyman Gifford still in a state of mental and moral collapse, unable, even by helpful suggestions,

to direct him what to do. But Richard Bolton was wise in emergencies. He knew instinctively what were the necessary tasks and he performed them. He brought order out of the morning chaos. He quieted the awful fear in Melissa's breast. He gave Aunt Emma new courage to perform her arduous and heartbreaking task. He even inspired the master of the house with some of his own quiet confidence and hope, and obtained a promise from him, when he left him later in the day, that he would hold fast to his self-control and do his duty as he ought. But when Richard Bolton was gone, and Lyman Gifford was again left alone, the old feeling of helplessness crept insidiously back into his soul, and, nerveless and disconsolate, he sat down and wept as he had done before. Late in the afternoon he went to his daughter's door and caught sight of her agonized countenance and heard her feeble moans. Then, white-faced and terror-stricken, he crept down the stairs and ran from the porch to the open road to hail a passing traveler on the way to Redstone.

"Find Dick Bolton," he cried, "and tell

him to come back here! Tell him, for the love of Heaven, to come back! We cannot do without him!"

So, at sunset, Richard Bolton came back. The doctor was just coming downstairs as he crossed the hall.

"What about the girl?" inquired Bolton.

The doctor looked at him with a white and hopeless face.

"Oh! she's going just like the rest of them," was the reply; "just like the rest of them. It's awful, Dick, it's awful to see your patients go like this, one, two, three at a time, and no power on earth to save them."

He sank into a hall chair, nerveless and exhausted, and dropped his head into his hands, and, hardened as he had been by the sight of suffering, unchecked tears followed each other down his cheeks. Then Dick Bolton, to whom no one would have listened in the old days, whose words would have been as wasted and as worthless as the rubbish of the street, — Dick Bolton tapped him on the shoulder and bade him be of good cheer. "I have seen a vision," said Bolton. "The clouds are about to lift. The worst is over.

It won't be long now till you and I and all of us can take a blessed rest."

There was something in the man's voice or his manner, some strange inspiring power that led the doctor to look up, believing. He went back upstairs and said to Lyman Gifford: —

"Dick's here; and he says the worst is over. And do you know, I'm inclined to believe him."

He returned to his patient's room while Gifford hurried downstairs and met Bolton in the hall.

"God bless you for coming!" he said. "I needed you. Take charge. Do everything. I leave it all to you. Only stay and help us, Dick; stay and help us."

At dusk Paul Bolton came. Calm, deliberate, resourceful, no one would have dreamed that for days and nights he had been under a tension which few men could have borne unbroken. No one would have dreamed that in an upper room of this house was lying almost at the point of dissolution one for whom he would have given up his own life and rejoiced in the giving. He consulted with the

doctor, he gave instructions to his father who was to stay for the night, he suggested things for the relief of the sick girl that no one else had thought of, and then he went out to the porch to return to his duties in the village. It was here that Melissa found him. She had never before been so gaunt, so ungainly, so thin-cheeked and hollow-eyed. She pointed a lean forefinger at Paul, who stood talking with his father and the doctor.

"She wants you," said Melissa in a whisper. "Aunt Emma told me to tell you. She ain't in her right mind; but she knows you're here an' she wants you."

So Paul went upstairs. At the door of Ruth's room he paused. She saw him standing there and beckoned to him weakly to come in.

"I wanted to see you," she said, as he bent over her. "It's all so very strange. Something tells me that I knew you before when I was a little girl. There was a white-haired boy — or did I dream it? — and he was very good to me. And I said an unkind thing to him one day and he went away — went away — and I have never seen him since.

And I have dreamed — I have thought — that it was to you I was unkind. And I want you to forgive me.”

He took her hand and pressed it to his lips. He did not speak, he could not. But looking into his face with eyes through which the light of other worlds came shining she saw that she was forgiven. And more than forgiven; oh, far, far more than that. She turned her face away then and closed her eyes; and when she looked again he was gone.

CHAPTER XII

WHEN the doctor came to Locust Farm the following morning, he found his patient, not as he had expected to find her in the article of death, but somewhat improved. The progress of the disease had at least been checked. She was in less pain. The fever had partially abated. The delirium was less marked. There was hope. He called Lyman Gifford and told him that there was a fair possibility now that his daughter might live. And Gifford, who had passed a sleepless and a terrible night, crept downstairs, his heart in a tumult of rejoicing, and whispered the glad news to Richard Bolton, and to Melissa, still faithfully plodding in the kitchen.

When the doctor returned to the village that morning, he took an urgent message from Lyman Gifford to the bank. At noon a bank messenger came with a parcel which he handed to the master of the house.

Then Gifford called Dick Bolton into the sitting-room.

"Take that chair," he said. "I want to talk with you. Ruth is getting better every minute. I believe now that she's going to get well. If she does I don't want her to look at me again till I've done a thing that, because she is so white-souled and is my daughter, I ought to have done years ago."

Bolton had little time to wonder what was coming before the master of Locust Farm continued: —

"Not that I've been guilty of anything criminal. I've never, to my knowledge, violated any law of the land. But I've been stingy and petty, mean and sordid, and often cruel to those who could not help themselves. Some who were near to you, Dick, did not escape my cruelty. I can't ask forgiveness of the dead, nor of one whom I cannot reach. But you have forgiven me or you would n't have come to me in my distress."

He paused for a moment as if to receive assurance that he was right.

"You don't need to ask forgiveness of me," was the response. "No hardship or cruelty

was ever visited upon any one of mine for which I was not directly at fault."

"Thank you, Dick! But you know I've been getting a little better these last few years, a little softer and more human. It's no credit to me. I could n't help it with that girl around. In these last few weeks I've realized my miserable littleness as I never did before. I've been trying, as the Bible says, to do 'works meet for repentance.' I've been trying to make myself fit to work alongside of that splendid young fellow up at Redstone who saved your life, and your soul, for all I know; and who's been the salvation of this community."

"You're right, Lyman Gifford!"

"Yes. I'm right. Now there's one more thing that's been lying heavy on my conscience for years. I have n't done anything about it because, in the first place, I was too mean and selfish, in the next place I did n't know how, and finally I was ashamed to try." He paused as if considering what to say next.

"If there's any way to help you, Lyman, I'm willing to try," said Dick.

“Yes, I know. Well, it’s this way. You remember about that five hundred dollars that was taken from me some ten years ago and found the next morning?”

“I remember.”

“You served time for it.”

“Yes.”

“Either you or your boy took that money, Dick. It does n’t matter now which one it was. You owned up to it at the time. Five years ago the boy sent to me the amount taken, with compound interest. Probably he did n’t know that I had already recovered it. He said in his letter that he stole it. If he did, then you have been a hero and a martyr for his sake. I believe he did. His letter had a ring of truth and honesty about it that impressed me. But that’s not the point. The question was, what was I to do with the money? I could n’t return it to the boy, for he gave me no address. You were not fit to have it, even though you had been entitled to it. So that was the way I eased my conscience and kept it, and never said a word about it to a living soul. Doubtless I would have gone down to my grave with

that blot on my conscience if it had n't been for this awful visitation of the Almighty. As it is I can't keep the money another day. I don't know where your son is. Possibly you do. But wherever he is I'll guarantee that he's leading an honest and worthy life. He had the making of a man in him as a boy. I tried to suppress it. He was driven to that one offense by my hardness and cruelty. I admit it. But this money belongs to you. This money, with compound interest from the day I took it from you, and something added by way of conscience money besides. Here, take it. Do what you like with it, only take it."

He had spoken more and more rapidly as he went on, with greater and greater intensity of feeling. Now, with his closing words, he took a parcel of bank-notes from his pocket and thrust it into Dick Bolton's hand.

"But I cannot keep it!" exclaimed Bolton, rising. "It's not mine."

"Then it's your son's, and some day you'll know where he is and give it to him. Keep it, Dick. For the love of Heaven, keep

it! Don't roll that burden back again on my conscience."

Bolton stood for a moment in thought. Then he said: —

"I will keep it, Lyman. My son shall have it. Sooner or later he shall have it. What he will do with it I don't know, but — he shall have it."

"Thank you, Dick, thank you! That's one more good deed you've done for me. You came to me here last night and saved me from desperation. I think I'd have gone crazy if you had n't come. And I shall pay you for it. I'll pay you well. But this thing you're doing now — this is — this is —" He broke down again, and with a muffled "God bless you!" he hurried away. His heart had grown very soft in these days as his conscience had grown tender.

At dusk Paul galloped out to Locust Farm for the second time that day, and learned that the sick girl was still improving. She was very, very weak, but there was now good ground for hope that she would live. In the dark days his lip had never trembled

nor had his eye grown moist. The battle was too desperate for tears. But now, with the dawning of a new and a beautiful hope, his heart grew suddenly soft and — those who saw him in that moment understood, and honored him.

Richard Bolton had been into town that afternoon to perform some humble service for the poor which he knew that none but he would either dare or condescend to undertake; and when he had driven the last nail into a rude pine coffin that held the body of one who had been his companion in days of revelry, he started back to Locust Farm where he had promised again to spend the night. On the way he met Paul, who dismounted and greeted him. They spoke of the blessed hope of Ruth's recovery and of the returning courage of her father. Then Richard Bolton told his son how Lyman Gifford had given him the money, and ended by placing the parcel in Paul's hands just as it had been placed in his.

"But, father," said Paul, "I cannot keep it. It does n't belong to me. I simply returned what I had stolen."

“And I cannot keep it,” was the response; “for it was never mine.”

“Then hand it back to Mr. Gifford.”

“Impossible! He would not accept it. He would feel hurt and humiliated.”

Paul stood for a moment in thought.

“I’ll tell you, father, what we’ll do. There are many cases of extreme destitution in the town, as you know. Some of them are pathetic and heartrending. We’ll use the money for their relief. Not that we have not already received funds for that purpose. Those who have money here have given freely, and Lyman Gifford has been second to none in the liberality of his contributions. But we need more, and the end is not yet. What do you say?”

“Good! I approve of it. It is nobody’s money, and it goes to help God’s poor. That’s right!”

When the town learned that Paul Friend had received from an unknown donor a gift of a thousand dollars for the benefit of the suffering poor, it stopped for a moment to breathe a prayer of thankfulness, and then went on about its sad and strenuous

business. And if Lyman Gifford wondered whether it was his money, returned to Richard Bolton, that had been put to this especial use, no one ever knew it. He never spoke of it again as long as he lived, nor did any one ever speak of it to him.

Not many days went by before Richard Bolton's prophecy came true. The vision of relief from the scourge which he had seen, and with the story of which he had heartened the worn-out doctor, became at last a reality. The tide of disease turned. New cases became fewer day by day. Deaths became far less frequent. Scores of the afflicted, like Ruth Gifford, who had been fast in the grim clutch of the plague, were well started now on the road to recovery. Shops were reopened. The streets were again busy. The clatter of the looms and the rumble of the wheels were once more heard in the district of the mills. People who had fled the town when the dark days came on began slowly to drift back to their homes. And no one ever spoke of the scourge, on the street-corners, in the business places, in the homes of the rich or the poor, that Paul Friend was

not acclaimed as the savior of the town, and Richard Bolton as his best and bravest lieutenant.

Then, suddenly, as by a stroke of lightning from returning clouds, Richard Bolton was stricken with the plague. People were loath to believe it. It was so sudden, so unanticipated. It was hard to understand. They could not realize that this man who had been so helpful, so comforting, so brave through all the sad days, should now, himself, be prostrate. But so it was. The onset of the disease had been sudden and terrific. Its progress had been irresistible. It was galloping on, by short stages, with awful rapidity to the sure and fatal end. He was taken ill at daybreak, and at midnight he died. There had been no public funerals in the town since the outbreak of the pestilence, and there was none for Richard Bolton. But when the bearers came to take his dead body to the graveyard on the hill and lower it beside that of his wife, a concourse of people such as Redstone had never before seen followed in their wake. So was he honored. He who had been justly despised in

his life, having been given by his Maker the privilege of spending his last months regenerate and clean, had so spent them as to merit the gratitude and love and honor of his fellow men, and to be justly exalted by them at his death.

From the hour when he was stricken, Paul had stayed by him. He had tended him, soothed him, and comforted him. And when the end was reached, he had closed the lids down over the tired eyes.

A few men, chosen by the village, gathered in the room with the bearers to hear the brief burial service read. When the reading was over and they were ready to go, Paul rose and stood by the coffin. They noticed that he was hollow-cheeked and ghastly, that his face was strained as if he were in pain, and that he wavered as he stood. But he had borne so much, and this was the last straw.

"Gentlemen," he said, "for a moment I ask your indulgence. I cannot let this dead man go to his grave bearing the stigma of a crime which he did not commit. Ten years ago he was charged with stealing a sum of money from Lyman Gifford. He did not

deny the charge and suffered the usual punishment for the crime. He did not steal that money, gentlemen. He had it on his person by the merest chance. I know, for it was I who gave it to him. It was I who stole the money. I was the thief. And he knew it. And in order to save me he bore the burden of the charge and the punishment. And he did it because — because I was his son. I am Paul Bolton, the albino, the runaway apprentice, the thief. I came to this town under an assumed name, deceiving you. I have carried on the deception. Now you know my story. I shall await such punishment as this town chooses to measure out to me, and I shall not run away from it. I may not live. The same disease that has despoiled so many of your homes, that has brought my father to this coffin, has fastened itself upon me. I go now to a bed from which I may never rise. I could not go until I had done justice to my father's memory, and had cast the lie out of my own life. That is all — thank you! — and good-bye!”

He tottered and would have fallen had not some of those near by sprang to his aid.

They helped him to his room, and he lay down calmly, bravely, to face the terrors of a disease of whose agonies he had such full and pathetic knowledge.

The news of Paul Friend's illness, together with the news of his identity, ran, like the proverbial wildfire, through the town. If people were astounded at the story of his confession, they were shocked and grief-stricken that he should be the final victim of the pestilence that he had fought so bravely on behalf of all of them. They talked of nothing save his pathetic revelation and his tragic illness. And if Paul had imagined that the true story of his life would turn the people of Redstone against him, he was wonderfully, oh, so wonderfully mistaken. Men came by scores, men who had received help and comfort from him in the black nights of sorrow and distress, and whose hearts were burdened with gratitude and sympathy, — came and offered their services for any task they might be permitted to perform. Women who had felt the tender ministration and loving protection that he had given to them and to those dear to them, through

awful days, came now and begged that they might nurse him. There were those who waited in the street before his house all day, hoping that by some chance they might be called upon to do some errand, the doing of which would alleviate, even in the least, the sufferings of the sick man. And there were those who patrolled the same street at night, walking with soft step and barring out all noise, so that if haply the sufferer should find sleep, he might not be disturbed. Nothing that human skill or loving hands could do, or tender hearts could devise for his comfort, was left undone.

So morning broke, and day dragged on, and another night went by, and then, indeed, Paul battled face to face and hand to hand with death. Through dreadful hours he fought; by day and night, with visions of things unseen to others crowding about him; to the last atom of his strength, with the final impulse of his soul, he fought; and when it seemed that his enemy must conquer, that the grim fight was almost lost, then the tide of battle turned; slowly, surely, almost imperceptibly it turned; and, minute by

minute, hour by hour, his chance of life increased. So he won in the conflict with death. But when it was over, he was weak and helpless as a little child. It was many days before he could turn his head on the pillow or raise his voice to whisper his desires.

If the people of the town awaited with tense nerves the issue of the conflict, neither was Paul forgotten at Locust Farm. Twice a day Lyman Gifford called at his door, asked after him, and begged to know what he might do to help the sufferer. Twice a day in her room at the old home, from a heart that yearned and believed, with lips as pure as heaven and earth could make them, Ruth Gifford sent up a prayer for his recovery. And who knows the power of prayer? Who knows?

When Paul was able, propped up in bed, to hold a pen in his trembling fingers, he wrote and sent the following resignation: —

To the Board of Directors of the Redstone
Woolen Mills Company:

GENTLEMEN, — In view of events which have taken place during the last few weeks,

events and revelations with which you are all familiar, I feel it my duty to place my resignation, as manager of the company, in your hands. My identity and history being now known, it is hardly possible that I shall have the confidence of this community to a sufficient extent to warrant your company in retaining me in its employ. With the highest personal regard for each one of you, and with earnest wishes for the prosperity of your institution, I am

Very sincerely yours,

PAUL FRIEND BOLTON.

The next day the answer came back. A special meeting had been called to consider and prepare it. And it was brought in person by Lyman Gifford. He was the first one, aside from the attendants, to be admitted to Paul's room. If he was startled at the change in the invalid's appearance, he did not by any word or look manifest his surprise. Had he done so he might well have been pardoned. For before him lay the albino boy, grown to manhood. In the strenuous days of his illness he had had no thought

to preserve his external disguise, nor had he any wish to do so. When he again appeared to the people of Redstone he would appear as his real and original self. That was his thought and his purpose. So Lyman Gifford found looking at him from the pillows a man with snow-white hair, with skin of marble hue, and with the pink-red eyes that he remembered of old. He took both the young man's hands in his and held them long before he spoke. Then he said: —

“I cannot talk to you now. Some day when you are strong I will talk to you. I will tell you what I think of you. I will tell you what the people here think of you. I will tell you that there is n't a man or woman or child that walks the streets of Redstone that does n't respect you and honor you and love you. I will tell you how ashamed and humiliated I feel when I think of those days in which you were my apprentice boy. Oh, I will tell you — Pardon me! I promised them that I would not talk. Here is the answer.”

Paul took it and read it. It said: —

We have considered your resignation and we are unanimous in declining to accept it. If any incident of your past life has been unworthy of you, your splendid service to the people of this community has obliterated all thought of it. We appreciate your ability and earnestness in the management of our business. You have lifted it from the experimental stage to one of great and, we believe, lasting success. In view of this fact the Board has to-day adopted a resolution increasing the rate of your salary by one hundred per cent. We wish you an abundant and speedy recovery.

Paul laid down the letter and found his handkerchief and pressed it to his eyes, and when he looked up again Lyman Gifford was gone.

When the last victim of the plague, who lived, could sit at his window in the sunlight and feel that it was good to breathe, when the young grass was growing green on the latest mound in the graveyard on the hill, and the last tear was dried, the people of Redstone appointed a day of public thanks-

giving for their release from the horrors of the plague. Not that the shadows were yet lifted from desolate and stricken homes. It was too soon for that. There were shadows that never would be lifted this side of the grave. For death had not been the worst calamity the pestilence had brought. It had left in its wake the deaf, the dumb, the blind, the imbecile, the hideous, poor wrecks of humanity for whom death had been a happier fate. But the monster was gone, the people were free, and they desired to express their gratitude in public speech. So for one day business stood still. Stores were closed. The looms and the spindles, the wheels and the belts gave neither sound nor motion. Only the music of the bells in the church towers smote the air. As Paul sat by his window looking up the street to the main thoroughfare of the town, he could see the people going by to their place of meeting, dressed in holiday attire. When the services were ended and the bells rang out again, he looked to see them trooping back. And he did see them, but when they came to the corner of his street they turned

down into it, scores of them, hundreds of them, till the street in front of the house where he lived was black with them, till it was filled from end to end with them. And then some one started a song: —

“To all the saints in glory,
To all the brave on earth.”

A hundred voices caught up the tune and words, a hundred more joined in, and in another moment the whole streetful of people were pouring out their hearts in song. The music rose and swelled, and rolled into Paul's ears as he sat there, and when it ceased he heard people in the crowd calling his name. Then some one, he never knew who, came and helped him into the hall and out on to the little balcony above the porch, and he stood there, bareheaded, in the glorious sunlight of a perfect day, and bowed his acknowledgment of the tribute, while the great throng below, with clapping hands and shouting voices and tear-wet eyes, made manifest their joy at seeing him. And out of the noise of riotous acclaim there came up to his ears many a “God bless you!” and many a “Good luck and swift recovery!”



BOWED HIS ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE TRIBUTE

But after that he did not any more doubt whether the people of Redstone wanted him to stay among them.

There remains but one more incident to complete this story, and it may as well be told. One glorious summer afternoon Paul Bolton, for the first time since his illness, went down to Locust Farm. It seemed to him that every tree bent down to welcome him, and that every little flower nodded to him from the grass along the wayside as he passed by. But the welcome he received at the end of his journey was far sweeter and more gracious than any he had ever before known.

Ruth was not shocked when she saw him. She had been told — not once, but many times — of the change in his appearance, and so she was prepared. But white hair is not a blemish when a man is full grown and mature, when he is tall and lithe and has in his cheeks the flush of returning health. And it was true, and Ruth Gifford acknowledged it to her throbbing heart, that no man more distinguished in appearance, more soberly fine-looking, had ever crossed her

father's threshold. Moreover, she herself had changed in looks, and her hair, that once had borne the tint of burnished gold, was flecked and banded now with wisps and undulating waves of gray.

As they sat together alone on the porch in the waning sunlight, she said to him: —

“I want to ask you something. Did I dream it or is it true that you came to see me when I was ill, and I begged you to forgive me for that time long, long ago when I was unkind to you, and you took my hand and — and —”

He took the sentence from her lips and completed it: —

“And kissed it, and could not speak because my heart was so full, and so I went away? Yes, it is true. And my heart is just as full to-day, and to-day you can listen —”

No other ear should hear and no other eye should read the story of love that an honest man whispers for the first time to the woman of his choice; and still less should the sweetness of her answer be made known to any save him alone. But it was all very beautiful. They both said so afterward. And

when Lyman Gifford heard of it, he, too, thought it was beautiful. So did Aunt Emma, and Melissa, and the doctor, and all the people of Redstone.

And Victor Willard and his wife were honored guests at the wedding.

THE END

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